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LETTERS BETWEEN
JAMES MMARTINEAU
AND
WILLIAM KNIGHT
‡

1869-72

LONDON
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET
1901



March 4, 1903
Divinity School

TO
THE VERY REVEREND
THE DEAN OF SALISBURY
THIS LITTLE BOOK
IS RESPECTFULLY AND
AFFECTIONATELY
INSCRIBED

THE CASTLE HOUSE,
ST. ANDREWS, FIFE,
February, 1901.

MY DEAR BOYLE,

To whom rather than to you should I inscribe this fragment of my correspondence with one whom we both regarded with admiration for his rare endowments and still rarer character? I think that many Churchmen will be interested in knowing how he discussed the problems to which these letters refer, in the sixties and early seventies of the nineteenth century.

Ever yours,

WILLIAM KNIGHT.

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PREFACE

THE late James Martineau was one of my intimate friends, and more than one hundred letters passed between us. Most of these I have sent to his biographers to use, as they deem fitting, in the great work which they have in hand. The nine which are now published stand somewhat apart from the rest, seven of them belonging to the years 1869-72, and two to the year 1888.

In common with many thousands—in Great Britain, America, our Colonies, and the Continent of Europe—I had known the *Endeavours after the Christian Life*, and other works by Dr. Martineau written in the middle of the nineteenth century, long before I made his personal acquaintance. In these days his writings fascinated me; and, as a youth, I revered him.

After I became his friend, our earliest correspondence, while I was still a young man, was mainly on the difference between his special theological point of view, and my own. It extended unexpectedly to several essay-letters, with minor notes thrown in between.

I have some *memorabilia*, in reference to my

friend, yet to record ; and in these I hope to be able to give a portrait of the man who was so strong an intellectual and moral force in the Philosophy and Religion of the nineteenth century, and whose writings have so powerfully influenced the English-speaking races, and many far beyond them ; but I cannot publish these, until Dr. Martineau's "official biography" is issued. It would be disloyal to his relatives, his friends, and the public to do so ; and I personally regret that so many notices and estimates, with memoranda included, have been published by his admirers in advance. This, however, is the fate which attends the work of all great men, in days of premature publicity, especially if they live to be nonagenarians.

The early letters now published are, in a sense, *sui generis*. They merely record, and reflect, one small episode in the life of a great man ; and to their publication the Martineau family have cordially consented. His letters to me are full of that wonderful insight, and deft handling of the *ultima* of belief, which characterised him from first to last. Mine are the casual utterances of early manhood, to a veteran in years knowledge and wisdom ; and they require the excuses of youth and immaturity. They were written rapidly. They have many inadequacies, and numerous *lacunæ*. I do not wish them to be taken as a complete expression of my present outlook, either in Philosophy or in Theology. It is more than thirty years since our correspondence

began ; and, when we returned afterwards to the oral discussion of the same problems—during many a delightful day at the Polchar, in London, or at St. Andrews—our treatment of the fundamental questions between us assumed different phases on both sides.

Although the book is published chiefly as the mirror of a brief and most friendly discussion in former days, it may perhaps be of some slight use in the midst of our later controversies, while the centre of gravity of the problem at issue has changed. I had quite forgotten the length to which my own letters extended ; and, as I kept no copies of them, I would have remained in ignorance of their very existence, had not the Misses Martineau recovered and sent back the originals to me. One justification of reproducing them now is that they are almost necessary to enable the readers of Dr. Martineau's words to know to what he is replying.

Amongst the later letters of my friend there are two on the perennial problem of Immortality, written to me on the death of his wife in 1877, which I would fain have included in this volume ; but since they are personal as well as general, I have sent them on to his biographers, who will doubtless make use of them in due time.

Conjoined with these early letters is the Address, which I drew up for presentation to Dr. Martineau on his eighty-third birthday. It then seemed to

me that a world-wide testimonial to him was appropriate in his later years. In carrying out the idea, I was aided (1) by Professor Estlin Carpenter, now of Manchester New College, Oxford—one of Martineau's most distinguished students—in obtaining signatures from friends in distant places; and (2) by the late Master of Balliol, Dr. Jowett, who kindly revised and recast my original draft. It is not necessary to reproduce the longer document written at first; but the final address, the signatures to it, and Dr. Martineau's reply are now published together; along with two explanatory letters from himself.

There are a few allusions in this volume to philosophical matters—books, problems, and discussions—other than the central one of the correspondence. They are published now only because they here find a more natural place than they could do in the official Biography. In that work there will be no room for minor matters; but in what I have sent to the compilers, there may be some things of permanent value. They contain disclosures of the philosophical position of Dr. Martineau amongst contemporary thinkers, numerous indications of opinion, characteristics grave and gay, and references to some important incidents in his life.

I have resolved, with some reluctance, to reprint in an appendix the Address delivered in Little Portland Street Chapel, more than a quarter of a century ago, to the conclusions of which I still

adhere, however immature their form may be. Dr. Martineau's letter of August 7th, 1872 (now published), refers to it, as do many others of those sent to his biographers; and the discussion which it originated, on "The Limits of Clerical Fellowship," was quite as important as that which followed it, on "The Ethics of Creed Subscription." The paper on that subject, originally contributed to *The Contemporary Review*, is reprinted in a second appendix to this volume, as it is the object of one of Dr. Martineau's criticisms.

WILLIAM KNIGHT

8

James Martineau to William Knight

INCHREE HOUSE, BY FORT WILLIAM
INVERNESS-SHIRE

Sept. 25, 1869

My dear Sir,

I fear that the expectation which your letter encouraged me to indulge, of hearing from you again in relation to some of the great Questions which divide the spirits of our time, has tempted me to neglect improperly the immediate response due to your communication from the Clyde. I will not however quit my summer retreat, and plunge again into the full tide of life, without saying that whatever thoughts you may favour me by sending on speculative topics, I shall ponder with genuine interest and respect; and follow up, as soon as the claims of a hard-working life permit, with such comments as may be suggested from my own point of view. I should much like to hear of anything that may be passing in connexion with your "Speculative Society," which apparently aims at the same ends as our "London Metaphysical Club." At the ensuing meeting in October, Huxley is to give a paper on Hume's

"Essay on Immortality,"* of course in defence of the negative view. He is a great admirer of Hume, and I fully expect that his outspoken vigour, in the face of Archbishop Manning, Dr. Ward, Dean Stanley—to say nothing of other men in no wise committed except in private feeling,—will severely "try the spirits." But I do not see why such a subject should not be discussed, in a modern Society, as calmly and thoughtfully as in the *Phaedo*.

If our Union carries out its project of a volume of Essays, do you know of any one, among the scholarly and philosophical men of Scotland, who would contribute an original and valuable paper, marked by special knowledge on some distinctive line of thought? I had thought of sounding Professor Caird of Glasgow, but from a young Oxford friend who has been reading with him this vacation I gather that he is a decided Hegelian: and though the passage *through* Hegelianism is perhaps one of the finest intellectual disciplines, I do not think that, in religious relations, guidance can be given by minds that rest in it. Besides, one essay,—on a subject for which the system gives an advantage,—may probably be furnished by a writer of that school. I have thought also of Principal Tulloch, and of Dr. Muir; but I fear refusal from the former; and I know too little of the latter.

We shall be at home in a few days now; after a

* His essay, "Of the Immortality of the Human Soul," first published in the edition by Green and Grose, 1875.

JAMES MARTINEAU TO WILLIAM KNIGHT 3

truly delightful and refreshing summer in this glorious corner of the world. My address will then be, 10, Gordon St., London, W.C.

Believe me ever, my dear Sir,

Yours very faithfully

JAMES MARTINEAU.

William Knight to James Martineau

THOUGHTS ON THE BORDERLAND BETWEEN THE
TRINITARIAN AND UNITARIAN FAITH

ROSEANGLE, DUNDEE

Sept. 29, 1869

My dear Sir,

I have felt for some years that the difference between the theological position which you endorse and advocate in your *Endeavours after the Christian Life*, and that of a Trinitarian like Mr. R. H. Hutton—as represented in *The Spectator*—is mainly a speculative one; that the point which divides the schools recedes ultimately into a mystery that is incognisable by the intellect; and that a reverent spirit may hover on the margin which separates the two, without the necessity of a choice between them. Whether the Unitarian or the Trinitarian system is the more philosophical inference from a series of unique moral phenomena is a question of the greatest theoretical interest; but I believe that the practical attitude of worshippers may be unaffected by their speculative divergence on that point. I find myself in much deeper spiritual sympathy with many who hold the former (the Unitarian) view, than with the majority of dogmatic system-builders

who hold the latter; and more in sympathy with the Trinitarians than with the hard systematising intellects amongst Unitarians. My late friend Mr. Cranbrook, from whose later religious philosophy I differed as widely as was possible, afforded us in Scotland a noble, and—of its kind—an almost solitary illustration of how little speculative divergence may affect the religious attitude or poise of the soul; and how deep spiritual affinities may remain and *grow*, while intellectual concord is no more. I am aware that the Free Christian Union invites and hails the fellowship of those who receive the doctrine of the Incarnation. It is as a Trinitarian that I enter it.

And while I feel that the Trinitarian solution of the ultimate enigma is to me the more philosophical, I own that *on that very account*, I find myself in deepest religious affinity with all reverent men in the opposite school of thought. It is not identity but difference of opinion that is the bond of fellowship, intellectual and spiritual. The inmost soul of fellowship is surely the recognition of *differences underlying points of unity*, and the bloom of that fellowship is respect for these differences. Surely our singularities, our egoism and one-sidedness, are best corrected by mental and spiritual contact with those who differ from us most widely. I would not construe it as a blessing to the Church, but rather as a sign of its paralysis and decay, were the loyalty of disciples to be tested by their identity of view as to the mystery of Christ's person. Our theodicy is not based on

a uniform postulate; nor is our anthropology; and why should our Christology differ from them in this respect? I think that minds of opposite type and idiosyncrasy will continue to construe the meaning of that Master Life in different ways, and to interpret it at sundry times in very diverse manners, supposing their light increased a hundredfold. We read the writing on the many-sided pyramid of Truth, just as we happen to turn our eye to this or that inscription on the column, and are able to decipher the mystic languages that are engraven there.

Thus, all that I feel warranted in saying is that to my mind the Trinitarian position, not in the hard uncouth lines in which it is commonly stated as a textual dogma, but as an inference from the unique moral phenomena of the Life of Jesus, and from some apparent necessities of the Divine Nature itself, seems more philosophical than the opposite inference.

In studying the records which survive of that Life—which has originated the controversies, as well as called forth the homage of Christendom—I do not feel the need of an elaborate process of critical inquiry as to the authenticity of those records. I accept them as fragments of ancient history, in which I *expect* to meet with all the characteristics of past Literature, viz. inexactitude, bias, the exaggerations of wondering love and reverence, side by side with a truthful portrait from eye witnesses of one, who was to the narrators in the first instance only a very

remarkable man. I begin to read the Gospels, as I read Herodotus or Livy. But when I proceed to study as well as peruse the narratives, their *form* becomes gradually of less and less significance to me, their origin or authorship of less moment, as I find myself in contact with a Personality immeasurably vaster than any other recorded in human History. And what most of all impresses me in "the man Christ Jesus," is *a singular harmony of opposites*, a union of contrasted attributes, which I nowhere else behold or hear of. His character seems a focus where the rays of varied excellence, which are solitary or scattered in broken fragments in the lives of other men, meet together; and where some features, which I do not see exemplified in the life of any other member of the race, are to be seen. Forgive me for restating what must be familiar to you, as it is the basis of my inference where we diverge; and correct me, if you think that inference at fault.

I find that he was in the profoundest sense holy, and yet he never repented, or made confession of an error or a failing. But does not all human piety start from penitence, as human character is readjusted through experiences of failure? The righteousness of Jesus is self-righteousness; and thus two things which are disparates in human morality seem blended in him. Then, I find the supremest self-assertion in alliance with the completest self-denial. The King of men is the servant of the beggar on the highway.

Next, I find the acutest sympathy with every

phase of humanity, with the keenest antipathy and most sensitive recoil from everything that mars the ideal perfection of man. In all other men we find, on the one side breaks in the range of their sympathies, and on the other the toleration of much that detracts from the moral ideal. Again, in Christ there seems to me an absolutely catholic universality, in alliance with a strongly defined individuality. He is an Israelite, yet a citizen of the world ; patriotic yet cosmopolitan. Then, he exhibits the serenest self-reliance, blent with absolute dependence on the Father. The active energies of our nature are in exquisite alliance with the passive virtues. There is perfect unworldliness without the slightest tinge of asceticism ; severity of moral purpose, with surpassing gentleness of spirit ; the strength of completest manhood, blent with the tenderness of ideal womanhood.

Again, he does not appear as a *truth-seeker*. You instinctively feel that Socrates' sublime confession, "all that I know is that I know nothing," would have been incongruous from the lips of the Son of Man. He taught as if the native home of Truth was within him ; and while he seems curiously unindebted to the past—directly, at least—he seems to have entered into all the heritage of ancient thought, reverencing and conserving it ; while no part of his teaching has been superseded by the marvellous progress of modern discovery. He seems to be *the heir of all the ages*. Does he not ?

Next, the purpose of his life—viz. to unite the whole

world in one vast federation by first uniting man to himself—is a unique moral phenomenon ; doubly so when we add to it that, while all things seemed opposed he had a fore-feeling of the result, and a prophecy in his own soul of its success ; while in his toil to found the Kingdom of God upon the earth, I find that—unlike all other reformers—he began with the poor. Finally, while his character seems unspeakably great at a distance, it is raised and intensified by familiarity.

This is the merest outline of the harmony of opposites which strike me in the life of Jesus. In brief, the Aristotelian *μερότης* was *in him an ideal made real*.

These facts arrest me, and seem to carry with them such a supreme moral glory, there is such a hiatus between his life and the lives of his contemporaries—and I discern no cause or causes operative in antecedent Jewish history, or in the consenting phenomena of the world at his birth, to produce or account for it—that I do not see how such a life could have been an outgrowth of the soil of Palestine. The law of hereditary development—moral continuity—seems to be broken. The crude Jewish actual could scarcely have given birth to this divine Ideal. There is no schism in this life ; could it then have sprung out of the schismatic distorted life of the Palestinian Jews ? Could it overleap at one bound the provincialism of centuries, and grow up to that stature noiselessly amid a throng

of Galilean peasants, ante-dating the whole moral progress of Christendom in a ministry of three years' duration?

Nevertheless, I do not think that any amount of historical testimony would suffice to convince me that we possess in the evangelical narratives the record of a Life that had *descended* into humanity (though I would be convinced that it was an exception *to* humanity, and could scarcely, under the most favourable conditions—and the conditions were unfavourable—be struck out by the creative energy of a human will under the inspiration of Heaven), unless I could discern some antecedent probability, founded on the very characteristics of the Divine Nature, that such a descent *might* occur, and possibly also a likelihood—founded on some other characteristics—that it *would* occur. When, therefore, I find it recorded that Jesus Christ on one occasion said, with the calmness and naturalness with which we speak of our earthly relationships, "I and the Father are one," "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father," I am led to interpret such sayings in the light of those unique phenomena of his life, which I am puzzled to account for on the law of hereditary developement; and led at the same time to ponder anew, in the light of that sentence, the Divine Nature itself.

Let me therefore try to state what it is in the Divine Nature which seems to warrant the belief that such a descent might occur. I suppose that

our theodicy must be based on our anthropology. Our doctrine of God springs from the root of our doctrine of man. I suppose we may meanwhile take it for granted—although the proof is a long and an intricate one—that the latter is the type of which the former is the archetype. And however little credit we may accord to the account of Creation in the book of Genesis as a piece of actual History, viewed simply as a poetic preamble to the memorabilia of Palestinian story, it is deeply significant that the first doctrine as to man which it announces is that he was “*made in the image of God.*” As the Greek poets stumbled on it happily, “We are his offspring.” The finite features of our human nature are always the dim, and occasionally the broken mirror, in which we may see the transcendent attributes of the Infinite reflected.

To put it otherwise, we ascend to the Divine from the human, by the ladder of analogy. But what do we find at the topmost rung of that ladder, while we start with our human nature, and project it upwards, glorifying it as we ascend, and throwing off the imperfections of our finitude, while by intuition we apprehend the presence of the Infinite? I do not think that it is the conception of one solitary being, dimly vast, colossal in its infinity, one in essence, and remote from man in its unity. For, in taking with us the analogy of human consciousness, we take before all things that characteristic which is the key to man's moral nature, viz. his love :

and does not that love demand another equal being on whom to spend itself? If the fountain of the Divine nature is the fountain of an eternal Love, must there not have been another not *beyond* but *within* the very nature of God, a moral *two-foldness* in it? Without *an object*, personal yet in some sense equal, towards whom the Divine emotion might flow forth, and on whom it might spend itself freely and without stint, would not the eternal Love have been an eternal selfishness? If love in God and man are identical or resembling, (and in opposition to the theoretical atheism of Dean Mansel, they surely must be so,) is not an object beyond self, and yet within the compass of the Divine, on which that Love might lavish itself, an almost necessary postulate?

I am well aware that this is a high aerial region of thought, in which the terms of our poor human speech break down, and I cannot do more than grope and make suggestions in the dark. But God could not love Himself from the eternal past. That would subvert morality, and turn the pure emotion at its fountain-head into the ghastly phantom of an everlasting selfishness. It would also play havoc with the law of human duty, as summed up in love to God. Nor do I think that the Universe could be the object of that Love eternally, although I am persuaded that, in all its manifoldness now in time, it is the object of his love. But unless we hold that the present complement of being in the

Universe was always what it now is, (though in altered forms)—that the universe of spirit and of matter was eternal—I do not see how the Divine Love could have been an everlasting reality, out-flowing from a Divine centre, except on the theory of an *eternal Duality within the Divine Nature itself*.

But this theory of an eternal universe existing *ab ante* side by side with an eternal God seems to me to do away with the necessity of the latter, or at least to reduce his function to that of an *opifex mundi*. The dualism which assumes, as one of its terms, eternal Matter, or everlasting Evil—whether of the more refined speculative type, or in the coarser form it took in Zoroaster's doctrine, and that of Manes—seems to me to be destructive of Theism. But is it so with *Duality within the unity of the Divine personality*? The notion of a moral two-foldness within the very nature of God, *a two-foldness which manifests the unity*, does not seem to involve a dualistic theory of the Divine Nature; any more than the fact that all our knowledge implies a relation between the subject knowing and the object known carries with it dualistic theory of consciousness.

There is a wide interval between the dualism involved in every conscious act of intelligence, and dualism as implying a double centre of personality; and I do not see that the doctrine of two natures in one Divine Essence implies the recognition and worship of two Gods, in other words that Trinita-

rianism is polytheistic. It is but the upper and the under sides of one personality. (Here of course we again use the poor glass of analogy.) But within the very unity of God I think we are warranted in assuming a dual element, a moral two-foldness—a love that moved between two poles, that went forth and returned again, that of each nature finding its object in the reciprocal and kindred nature of the other; and the antithesis of the two making up the unity of the Divine Essence. I recognise that this two-foldness cannot be arithmetical but moral. It may help us to realise it if we think of a *voice, and its echo*, in another living voice and will.

To the coldly logical calculating mind, it must of necessity be not only an enigma, but a *contradiction* that “two” should also be “one,” but when Jesus said “I and my Father are one,” he surely spoke not of physical or measurable ratios, but of a moral relationship; and thus transferred from the outward sphere to the inward, the apparent contradiction becomes to me not a stumbling-block, but a sacred mystery.

Nevertheless I perceive that neither the speculative difficulty of Creation, nor the mystery of the Incarnation, are cleared up by this doctrine of a moral duality in God. The difficulty of understanding how the Universe could arise out of non-existence, could flash forth on the stage of manifested being out of the fountain-head of the Divine Causality, is not in the

least explained by the doctrine of the Logos, as the Jewish Kabbala seems to teach, and Cudworth's notion of a "plastic medium" in vain attempts to render Cause intelligible. Nor do I see why one rather than the other of the two centres of personality, which I am speculatively constrained to recognise as existing within the Divine unity, should have been manifested in time, under finite conditions on the earth. But the historical record of that Life, which I had previously marvelled at, and felt to be inexplicable as the product of known human forces, becomes to me now more intelligible if I am warranted in believing that it is the outcome, in time and on the earth, of One whose nature was both giver and receiver, the object and the subject of eternal Love. I am able to approach Him not only without the chill of the Infinite overshadowing me, but in a "love that casts out fear," when I recognise that he who tells me he is "a way unto the Father" was the object of an eternal Love. Still more when I think of One, who was eternally the object of that love, veiling his glory, and appearing within the contracted area of a human life to help me to believe it, I am led to adore that attribute, as well as to love it in its condescension.

To my own mind, there is no special difficulty in the conception of the descent of a King of Men from his throne, under certain conditions, to effect a given end. The dogma of the Incarnation does not startle me, when I think of human nature as

constituted in the very image of the Divine, yet disorganised awhile; and of the Divine intention to readjust its balance, by the display of an absolute Love. If it is the nature, and therefore the glory, of love to spend itself *by ever descending*, and thus to feed its own eternal fire, the appearance of the Son, who was the object of infinite Love and familiar with its majestic processes by experience, within the boundaries of our humanity—to effect a royal end for creatures, whom he recognised as at once his subjects and his brethren—seems to me to be no degradation, but rather an exaltation of his nature. Would not inability to leave his throne, and identify himself with his creatures, have been a more serious limitation to the expansive generosity of his love?

Is not the lavish expenditure of that love as much a *descent*, as his personal identification with us? The gift of a part is not the same thing as the gift of the whole; but, if the former be a *fact*, does it not remove the difficulty of the latter, and make it dimly comprehensible as a supplement to it? I do not see how the notion of degradation is at all predicable of the Incarnation, for this reason. The highest conception we can form of the infinite Being, who may be spoken of as the “King of kings,” is not that of an Oriental Monarch, seated on some vast throne of state, surrounded by flatterers, and exacting the homage of menials. It is only when we think of a Monarch leaving some vast *physical* throne that the idea of degradation can possibly

enter in. But the very conception of a physical throne is degrading.

Ascending, therefore, to the notion of a King, by the same ladder of analogy by which we reach the conception of the Eternal Love, we throw off, as we ascend, all the imperfections which surround our human state, and retain only those conceptions which "that type of perfect in the mind" guarantees to us as absolute. The notion becomes sublime, while we ascend; and then, adoration starts her hymn. We think of universal sovereignty, lordship, dominion, inherent regal greatness, and the complete vassalage of the creature. But, *for the same reason*, we carry up with us the conception of the *possible descent of the King from his Throne* for the good of his subjects, without renouncing his royalty: and, while a subject in outward form, remaining a King in nature, if thus he could best—or only thus—train his subjects to kingly acts of sacrifice and moral greatness. And so, the greatest would prove his greatness, and confirm it, by being the servant of all.

In the light of this moral postulate, viz. the possible descent of the King from his throne, I reverence the records of that unique Life which all Christendom admits to be the Master-life, and its power the solitary Master-power in the world. And what I feel myself warranted in inferring is this: that here, and here alone, is the *pleroma* of the Divine within the human nature. I find that he is "anointed above measure" as the Teacher, Guide, Educator, Friend, and Purifier

of the race. He is to me "the fulness of the God-head" bodily displayed.

I cannot account for his perfection by merely supposing that he received a special prophetic anointing, "the oil of gladness above his fellows," a continual guard or panoply against evil. To me it seems rather that the harmonious evolution of his life—as the rosebud expands into the rose—was due to the progressive manifestation of a power above humanity; the unfolding of the petals of the flower without a flaw, being the outgrowth in time, and under conditions amenable to its own inward power, of a life *sui generis* divine. If his soul had been merely plastic under the inspiration of Heaven, and his will in harmony with God's in every act of moral energy, his nature a receptacle of divine grace—filled to overflowing because he never resisted its descent—then I think we should find *some historic parallels to it*; or else we should find that his life exhibited, here and there at its more solemn crises and junctures, the flaws incident to humanity at large.

But all I feel warranted in *inferring* from the uniqueness of his life is that there was a *moral* incarnation of God within the limits of a finite life; and as we cannot compute moral greatness as we measure intellectual stature or material vastness, I do not find any barrier to my faith in the seeming limitations of an earthly life. I find that he alone has adjusted the focus of the lens by which I discern the moral attributes of God; or, to make use of a

popular illustration, as the double object in a stereoscopic slide, seen by the glass through which we darkly survey it, brings out one rounded whole—an image more distinct because formed by the blending of two co-operating pictures,—so with the double nature of our Lord. The analogy doubtless fails, as all symbolism must, for the two pictures in the stereoscope are not diverse but the same.

I have felt for some time that Theism requires some aid from Christianity. The chief problem in that frontier land—which is most dark in natural Theology—viz. the personality of God—is lit up by a few rays of light, when I study the words and acts of Jesus Christ. It is thus that I speak of the focus of our lens being adjusted for us by him. But this is too vast a question to enter upon, at the close of a letter already far too long.

Forgive any tediousness, and repetition in the course of it,

And believe me again,

Yours, with most respectful esteem,

WILLIAM KNIGHT.

James Martineau to William Knight

10, GORDON STREET

LONDON, W.C.

May 2, 1870

My dear Mr. Knight,

It is not without too good reason that you wonder at my long silence,—occasioned though it be, not by disregard of your autumn letter, but by extreme interest in it, and the inability to save calm moments enough to do it justice. The result of the high pressure under which I live is, that what must be done by a definite date gets accomplished, while the indeterminate work, which waits for some interstice of opportunity, remains without admission till I am almost ashamed to meet it face to face. And so in this world it seems ever to be, that the importunities carry all before them, and the patient modesties are crowded out. Bear with me however a little longer,—perhaps till my vacation takes me to Scotland after Midsummer: and my thoughts, when I am sufficiently out of the whirl to have any, will turn eagerly to the subject on which you give me so much to ponder.

As for Keshub Chunder Sen's movements;* I heard him say last night that he proposed not to leave London before the latter part of June. He intends to visit Lancashire about that time, and will probably give a lecture, or lectures, in Liverpool and Manchester. At present I do not think he has formed any ulterior plans; and I cannot at all say whether he is open to invitations further North. His London address is 4, Woburn Square, W.C., and the best way would be to communicate with him by letter direct. I should be very glad to see him taken out of the hands of the Unitarians, who have too much appropriated him in public, though in private he is well received by all classes. He is amazed and repelled by the state of religious division in which we live, though he thought himself prepared for it by what he had seen in India: and it is obvious that, thus far, his respect for our Christianity is greatly lowered by what he sees around him. It evidently needs all his Oriental and personal graciousness to restrain him from the expression of an unqualified repugnance. And it is plainly his *religious* feeling, far more than his intellectual and social, that is hurt by our hardness and narrowness.

Believe me ever,

Yours most truly,

JAMES MARTINEAU.

* This refers to another letter, in which I told Dr. Martineau that I and the late Dr. Watson, (Moderator of the Church of Scotland) wished to invite Keshub Chunder Sen to Dundee.

James Martineau to William Knight

THOS. AINSWORTH'S, ESQ.

TALLADH-A-BHEITHE

PITLOCHRIE, PERTSHIRE

July 25, 1870

My dear Mr. Knight,

The letter which I had the privilege of receiving from you last autumn discussed questions so momentous, and with so careful an ability, that I have felt it more respectful to answer it in tranquil moments of reflection, than to throw off an early reply amid the restless haste of my London life. The months which are a sensible section of our experience go for nothing in the history of those great problems, to which thought and faith return,—baffled perhaps but still unwearied,—from age to age.

I am struck with the coincidence between your reasoning and feeling in regard to the Trinitarian theology, and those of my friend Mr. Hutton, with whom I have often spoken on the themes which you discuss. You treat the doctrine of the Incarnation, not as authoritatively given, so as to rest on the infallibility of either Scripture or the Church, but as "*an inference* from the unique moral phenomena of the life of Jesus";—an inference requiring no other premisses than the undisputed facts of his history and character, and unaffected by any amount of mis-

conception which criticism may detect in gospel narratives as they stand. The argument claims, if I rightly understand it, to be independent of the results of modern criticism, and to save the essential doctrine, without reserving anything from the free hand of honest research. Yet you admit that the moral phenomena of Christ's personality would not have enabled you to see in him a Descent of God into humanity, had he not himself given you the clue, in his words, "I and my Father are one," "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." These are passages from the 4th gospel: and from that gospel is really drawn the whole theory respecting the person of Jesus in its relation to God, and the pre-existent union of the Son and the Father, on which so much stress is laid. If this gospel is not historical, but a free product of the Christian genius in the middle of the second century, the very sayings fall away without which, you admit, the Incarnation would not be deducible.

Accordingly, I observe that the authenticity, or the historical trustworthiness of the fourth gospel, practically stands as an article in the creed of this theological school: and it is not without a most important reservation, that they can announce a theology which is lifted above the contingencies of historical criticism. In truth, by whatever theories, as after-thoughts, we may try to render conceivable and acceptable, mysterious and startling statements respecting the nature of Christ, we should never, I

suppose, have thought of claiming for him more than we assume to have been his claims for himself. These therefore must be the rule to go by; and if we see reason to believe, that the lofty language of self-assertion, whether as the Logos, according to the 4th gospel, or as Messiah, according to the Synoptics, is attributed to him only by retrospective construction, the whole groundwork falls away on which any theory of his super-humanity can rest. If he did not teach such a doctrine, no one else can pretend to have made it out.

Till therefore the historical data are settled between one school and another, speculative argument which passes them by seems to promise no result, but a hypothetical one, which throws us back on the neglected assumptions. Most of the features of moral beauty and grandeur which you trace in the character of Jesus, I also recognise. But one or two of the characteristics,—precisely those most essential to your inference,—the self-assertion—the unindebtedness to the past,—the purpose of uniting all the world in a federation by uniting them to himself,—are to me (1) not beautiful (2) not historical: nor do I think that the true image of what he was is reached till he is divested of the whole dress which the Messianic mythology and Alexandrine theosophy have thrown around him in our gospels. This done, the figure which merges is to my eye simply human,—of ideal strength and beauty,—the purest model of the relation between God and the soul of man; but with

no inapprehensible element transcending our inner scale of spiritual possibility. To *account for* such a character,—to say whether or not it was producible under the historical conditions of the time,—is quite beyond any competency of mine. The causes of special character and genius on the ordinary level of history escape us almost entirely; and to make our measure of them, when it fails, a reason for resorting to a solution by either “possession” or “incarnation,” seems to me to turn a simple ignorance into a serious danger.

If therefore I found in the personality of Jesus any features out of all human proportion or analogy, I should prefer leaving them unexplained (if the evidence recommended them to acceptance) to construing them into the descent of a God from heaven. But, I must own, the chasm does not look to me altogether impassable from the higher spiritual Judaism to the religion and the character of Christ: and he appears to me to be but “the consummate flower” of a divine discipline and a sublime faith which, after producing for ages a literature of devotion quite unique, was still, in its silence, fostering and enriching the spiritual apprehensions of the deeper natures nurtured in it. The ever open communion between the divine and the human spirit,—a communion in part proportioned to fidelity, but in part determined by laws we cannot measure, and capable of results we cannot limit,—is surely adequate to lift the inspiration of the later Isaiah to

the ultimate insight and perfection of the Son of Man.

And as in the historical Jesus I do not find myself carried beyond the spiritual capabilities of humanity, neither can I feel the *a priori* necessity,—in regard to the Divine Nature, of admitting a personal duality which would provide for such a fact as an Incarnation. I accept the human analogy as the only one which can rule our conceptions of the Infinite Mind: and allow, in conformity with it, that God can never have been without objects of his eternal Love. But that those objects should be *equals* and *coeternals* with himself, seems to me to be quite an arbitrary assumption. And that they (I use the *plural*, because I suppose what holds of the 2nd person of the Trinity, holds also of the 3rd) should be "*within his nature*" appears to contradict the very analogy from which it is deduced: for *an object loved* cannot be *within the loving nature*, without reducing the love to a form of *self-love*. Affection has no reality, which does not go forth upon an extrinsic nature,—another than the being who feels it: and if the subjective and objective facts are both within the unity of the Divine Mind, such an illusory play of duality resolves itself, when the disguise is removed, into the eternal "solitude" and "selfishness" which it is your aim to escape. The mutual love of two Gods I can understand: but not the mutual love of two functions, factors, or relations, of one God.

The impossibility of presenting such thought in an

apprehensible form is shown in the shifting phraseology employed to express it. You speak of a "duality within the divine *Personality*": but the doctrine requires, not two somewhats in one Person; it requires two *Persons* in one God. Unless the personality comes twice over, the relations of personal love cannot be. And if the personality comes twice over, so that in one case it is incarnate, in the other not—and between the two a whole drama of moral action and affection can take place—the conditions of Ditheism are surely complete. Why, you ask, should a two-foldness in the Divine Nature contradict the unity of that Nature, more than the double character of cognition, carrying subject and object, involves "a duality of consciousness"? (meaning doubtless by duality of consciousness in this connexion, that subject and object *belong to two natures, and cannot coexist in one*). I answer: because we may *know ourselves*; but we can *love only another*. Cognition can complete its act at home: but affection must pass out abroad, and find what is other than self. Instead of saying therefore that the two-foldness in question "*is not arithmetical, but moral,*" I should feel constrained to say that, *in order to be moral, it must be arithmetical*; all moral relations implying a plurality of persons. Indeed, of number that is not numerical I can form no idea.

To satisfy the exigencies of Infinite Love, then, there must be, not an inward division of the Infinite Nature, but other and objective beings with a life and

sphere of their own. In what respect created natures, in perpetual series, fail to fulfil this condition, I am unable to discover. You allow that the *present universe* is an adequate object of God's love. But in that case, so must yesterday's universe have been, and that of any and every other point of past time: and deficiency of object for his affection is unimaginable, except on the exploded assumption of an *a parte ante* eternity of empty space. Indeed, you seem to concur in this, and to admit that, if the complement of being were constant, with variation only in its manifested forms, an eternal affection would be provided for, if only we could be sure that it was there. But you are apprehensive lest, if we allow a perpetual Cosmos, we should be dispensing with an eternal God, except as an *opifex mundi*.

It is curious to observe how differently different minds are affected by the same considerations. This is precisely the criticism which I should apply to the opposite doctrine, of absolute creation. The Judaical Theist (*i.e.* Deist proper) insists upon originating God in the past,—at an epoch of creative construction, because he sees no originating or immediately acting God in the present, but fancies that nowadays the world goes of itself, and unless we can get out of it into chaos at the far end of time, we shall be locked fast in an atheistic system. It is then distinctly as an *Opifex mundi* that God is here called into requisition: if he is not that, he is regarded as absent altogether. And in proportion as the once imagined

vestiges of creative epochs disappear, and the formula of the conservation of force comes to fit, better and better, what we know of nature as a system, *this* religion is shaken, and its believers passionately chase the attenuated shadows of a retiring God. If I had ever staked anything upon the proof of a date or period *prior to Law*, or to the *very Laws we now observe*, I should long ago have been swept away by the atheistic current which carries our men of mere Science so far out to sea. But, as it is, I want no such date or period; because I find it demonstrable, by the only evidence and all the evidence applicable to such questions, that the sole force or causality other than our own that acts in the world, from moment to moment to-day and always, is the Living Will of God.

The physical enquirer, in showing us that all force is one, compares its *quantities* as it passes from phase to phase, and works out its equations, with mechanical terms on one side, and chemical, vital, or mental on the other; and is delighted with the discovery that if you double the amount on the left, you double the equivalent on the right. This is well. But the *qualitative* question remains: *which* of the several phases, through the series of possible metamorphoses, is to be accepted as the type representing the *One Force* into which all are resolvable? The physical men tacitly, but without the slightest warrant, assume that the *lowest phase*,—the mechanical,—has priority and ultimate

reality, and somehow walks upstairs into the chemical laboratory, the biological nursery, the intellectual observatory. The opposite order is in itself equally conceivable,—that the higher terms should successively divest themselves of their specialties, and stoop to become the lower. And that this is the true mode of conception is rendered certain by the psychological investigation of our ideas of “Cause” and “Force”; which are not furnished from without, but are absolutely without meaning for us except as the objective planting-out of our own Will.

For reasons of this kind, at which in so short a compass it is barely possible to hint, but which, on the principle “*Verbum sat sapienti*,” I was unwilling wholly to pass by, I feel no interest in seeking for more of God in any past time than in the present. Whether what we call *Matter* is also an entity, the eternal condition of his manifestation of Power, or whether it be a phenomenal mode or variety of that manifestation, I do not in this connexion care to determine. There are difficulties both ways. But anyhow the one thing certain to me is, that the universe is the ever-constant, ever-varying expression of the Infinite Indwelling Mind, whom, if I did not immediately meet to-day, I should in vain seek in the shadows of primeval time.

I must however add that it is not in the relation of God to the Cosmos, but in his relation to free and responsible wills,—*i.e.* in the revelations of *Conscience* that I find the most impressive indications of the

Divine affinities which consecrate our life: and, but for this double voice, of the moral as well as the intellectual nature, I do not know that the Universe would speak to us with the articulate divineness of its present appeal. The specific effect of the authority of Conscience on religious theory seems to be that it gives us a *Spiritual and Transcendent God*, not simply an *Immanent and Necessitating God*; and so prevents the substitution of Pantheism for Theism.

With a universe then peopled ever, as now, with beings not only sentient but, in many of their races, intellectual and spiritual, the Infinite Love could not want for adequate objects;—partly, of simple Providential benignity;—partly, of the higher affection which involves communion, sonship, and reciprocation of moral life. That such sonship is impossible without an eternal and incarnate Son is a proposition wholly unintelligible to me. Since men “in the image of God” would in any case really be *his sons*, why it should be out of the question for them to recognise this relation, and be brought to dispositions accordant with it, I cannot see.

I am sometimes surprised that the old monophy-site and monothelite controversies do not reappear under the recent revival of the Incarnation doctrine. Surely the difficulties it presents are very real. Was the body of Jesus the residence of a *Divine Personality*, and worked by the will and affections of the *Eternal Son*? Then he was human only in sem-

blance, the inner self was God. It is not on the character of a brother man that we gaze; and he was not one of us, except in organic structure. Or, was the Eternal Son co-present in the body of Jesus, with a human mind and will? Then (the human mind and will constituting a person) either the Eternal Son was not personal, or there were two persons in the visible form of Jesus, and the moral phenomena are undecipherable.

The more I reflect upon these things, the more profoundly convinced I am that the idea of an historical Incarnation affords no permanent standing-ground for a Religious Philosophy: and I look upon it as the transitory means of saving the supreme truth,—which Theism would else have lost,—of the life of God in the soul of man,—a life intense in proportion to self-surrender. This aspect it is of the doctrine, together with the whole cluster of sentiments, penitential and trustful, that gather round it, which has always drawn me in heart to the piety of orthodox Christendom far more than to that of my fellow-believers. But though I *feel* with other Churches—and their hymns and prayers speak to me in the tones of a home-music—I cannot *think* with them, and my wonder at their creed increases from year to year. Were all defences of it like yours, however, the theological distances would be rapidly reduced.

You have perhaps noticed that we have not had encouragement enough to proceed with the ex-

periment of the Free Christian Union. Though representative men joined it from every important British Church, and *intensively* it proved itself a true interpreter of a real and characteristic want of the times, it had not, *in extension*, sufficient support to become effective. In proportion, too, as *ecclesiastical politics* press to the front, we find serious differences arise among ourselves on questions of immediate action, such as the use of Creeds in worship, and the Ethics of Conformity. In the English Church, liberals who stay in reproach those who go out, and *vice versa*; and National-Church-advocates diverge from "Liberation"-men. Moreover, we could not get men *to do the work* required. A young and energetic executive, unattainable in London, might have fought a way through to success. I am not sure however yet that the proposal to dissolve will be carried: so great is the regret at the prospect.

You must forgive this long trial of your patience. Next week, and for many weeks, my address will be *Kiltyrie, Killin*.

Believe me, ever,

Yours very faithfully,

JAMES MARTINEAU.

William Knight to James Martineau

NEWPORT, BY DUNDEE

Dec. 21st, 1870

My dear Mr. Martineau,

It will have called for all your kindness in construing anomalies in conduct, to understand my silence since receiving that letter in early autumn, which laid me under so large a debt of gratitude and obligation to you. I was in Argyleshire for a month after it reached Dundee, and by some accident it was not forwarded to me; and, although that letter rather gave me food for thought than incited to correspondence, I did begin to write some pages on my return.

But I have been giving a course of Lectures in Dundee on the History of Theism, or more accurately on the attempts that have been made to construct a Science of Natural Theology. I had long thought it possible to give to those who desired it, resident in a mercantile community like ours, by a course of lectures on Philosophy, a partial equivalent for the more thorough discussion of such themes, which can only be obtained at a University. And as the questions of Theism have occupied most of my leisure for some years, I chose that subject. The

experiment has succeeded far beyond my expectation; as only seventy persons signed the requisition which induced me to begin the lectures in September, and between three and four hundred have attended the course. My difficulty has been the superabundance of material of one sort or another, and the difficulty of popularising a discussion which, dealing with the Source of Existence, leads at once into the heart of the great metaphysical problems.

I enclose a small chart of theistic theories, or "modes of proof," which was printed, along with my syllabus, as a partial guide to the audience.* The want of a good classification of these lines of proof is obvious, and I have already seen reason to modify this one very considerably. My chief difficulty was in naming the last section, which should probably be called *esotero* or *esoterico*, rather than *eso-theological*. Here it is—in the intuition of the soul, in its triple phrase, (intellectual, esthetic, and religious,) that I think the main evidence is to be found ; evidence

* SCHEME OF THEISTIC PROOFS.

| | | | | |
|--------------------------------|---|--|---|-------------------------------------|
| <i>Onto- theological</i> | { | 1. From necessary notion to reality..... | { | <i>Anselm.</i> <i>Descartes.</i> |
| | | 2. From Space and Time as attributes to their substance. | | |
| <i>Cosmo- theological</i> | { | 1. Antithetic. | | |
| | | 2. Causal. | | |
| | | 3. Sufficient Reason. | | |
| <i>Teleo- theological</i> | { | 1. Techno-theological. | | |
| | | 2. Typo-theological. | | |
| | | 3. " " (animal instinct). | | |
| <i>Ethico- theological</i> | { | 1. Deonto-theological (direct). | | |
| | | 2. " " (indirect and inferential)..... <i>Kant.</i> | | |
| <i>Eso- theological</i> | { | 1. The Infinite. | | |
| | | 2. The World-Soul. | | |
| | | 3. The Instinct of Worship. | | |

which becomes doubly strong when connected with the moral attestation of a law, "in us, yet not of us."

I have been led to tell you of the work which has engrossed me for three months, as a partial excuse for my otherwise inexcusable delay in acknowledging your letter. In a few weeks I hope to be able to shew you how much beholden I have been to your thoughts on the great themes which it discusses.

Meanwhile, will you accept a copy of a little work I edited in May last. It contains a few fragments of the *Colloquia* of a very remarkable man, from whom some years ago I received many onward impulses.* My notes of his conversation are extremely desultory. But I think you will find something to interest, even where you entirely dissent. I differed from much of my teacher-friend's theology; but I thought it more respectful to the memory of one—for whom I entertained the deepest regard and veneration—not to signalise that difference in any other way than by those questions, &c., interjected in the course of our conversations.

The long argument between Dr. Duncan and V. V. [myself] touches on some of those questions, with which your letter deals.

I remain, with all the good wishes which this blessed season brings,

Very sincerely yours,

WILLIAM KNIGHT.

* *Colloquia Peripatetica, Deep Sea Soundings, being Notes of Conversations with the late John Duncan, LL.D., Professor of Hebrew in the New College, Edinburgh (1870).*

James Martineau to William Knight

10, GORDON STREET

LONDON, W.C.

[December, 1870]

My dear Mr. Knight,

I must not let the year die out, without sending on its last breath my hearty thanks to you for the *Colloquia Peripatetica*, which have added a precious interest to my few hours of Christmas leisure. The little volume is most congenial to me, alike when it disputes, and when it corroborates, my own reasonings and convictions. Some of the judgments of the old Professor (*e.g.* that upon Arianism) are so exact a duplicate of long-established opinions of my own, that if Dr. Duncan had belonged to an earlier age, I should have suspected myself to be a sort of degenerate re-incarnation of his soul. I trust however he is far removed from so deplorable a lot; and has reached the light for which we still sigh.

Whilst I write, I have to acknowledge your further kindness in sending me the report of your concluding lecture on the History of Theism. It needed not the personal interest which you have

so generously conceded to me in it, to render the whole report in the highest degree riveting to my attention, and to make me long to be similarly introduced to the whole series. I do trust that you will publish them. In the whole argument and exposition in this lecture, I go with you, mind and heart: and I am astonished that any intellectual man, who passes from the narrow negations of the physicists to the noble breadth of an argument like yours, can fail to be struck with the character of higher Reason that pervades it. I believe you are right in freeing yourself from the feeling which has always made me shrink from systematic treatment of the ultimate problem of life. I never could construct a statement that at all came up to my own measure of conviction; so I have feared to weaken in others what I longed to confirm. But this is probably a mistake, though, as a matter of feeling, I cannot rid myself of it.

With truest good wishes for the new year and every year,

Believe me ever,

Yours very faithfully,

JAMES MARTINEAU.

[Some intermediate letters have been lost.]

William Knight to James Martineau

NEWPORT, BY DUNDEE

March 14th, 1871

My dear Mr. Martineau,

My chief difficulty in construing the life of Christ as merely the "consummate flower" of Judaism, lies not so much in the chasm which separates him morally from every other teacher and labourer for humanity, as in the fact that he sinks much *lower* than the majority of the Jews, unless the claims which he made for himself were real and authentic. No doubt if he did not advance these claims himself—if they are the after-thoughts of loving disciples and idealistic commentators—the theory deduced from them falls to the ground. But it puzzles me to realise the process of retrospective adoration, by which the nucleus of a few remarkable sayings of a distinguished Rabbi could grow into a connected series of assertions, so unique and stupendous as those which the Fourth Gospel contains. The claim is so homogeneous, persistent, symmetrical, expansive—it is the warp running through the whole web of the life, which gives it continuity, consistency, and

beauty—that, if you take it away, the life itself seems to fall asunder into fragments.

But, while I have been much struck with the moral characteristics of the Fourth Gospel as an internal testimony to what it records, it is better to put this Gospel aside for the present, and to turn to the Synoptists, the historic character of whose writings is more generally admitted.

As artistic products they seem to me to have all the characteristics of realism, rather than of poetic idealization. Rough, and often inartistic, they appeal only the more powerfully, (*me judice*), to the historic sense.

If then Jesus had only now and then ventured to assert great things of himself, we might put those assertions down either to the exaggeration of disciples, or to his own share of the infirmities of human nature. But the claim he makes is lifelong, is unflinching, and it is calmly made in the most diverse circumstances—fitted to test a character, and try its genuineness—so that, if we subtract it, we make so large a moral excision from the life that scarcely a fifth part of its integrity remains. Nor is this all. The excision is not *mere subtraction*, leaving the remainder unaffected by the off-cutting. But, if these claims must be set aside as unreal, *they very seriously damage what remains of the character of their claimant*. They rob it of its truthfulness. It is thus that I feel compelled to choose between these two alternatives, viz. either Jesus was above all men,

unparalleled, alone; or he sinks far beneath the majority, in other words he was *unveracious, egotistic, domineering, vain towards his contemporaries, arrogant towards posterity*. He is now unworthy of the *respect* of Christendom, if he is not worthy of its *devotion*. This seems to me to be merely a question of interpretation, and I am prepared to adopt *any* theory that best accounts for the facts before us.

If this most singular result, (the character as we have it in the record of the Synoptists,) can be explained as the growth of a century of idealizing, I am prepared to accept that theory: but, it is precisely when brought alongside of even a minimum of facts, that the exigencies of the theory are seen, and that (as it seems to me) it breaks down.

Before proceeding to give you a list of instances in which the claim is advanced, I should add that often when the statement made does not amount to anything superhuman, it is *exceedingly audacious, and very unlovely*, on the supposition that the speaker was only "one of ourselves": as, for example, when he read from the roll of Isaiah in the synagogue of Nazareth, and added, "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears." We could not imagine Socrates talking thus. When we consider the subject-matter of the text he had read, his commentary is surely very egotistic, unless he was more than an ordinary Jew.

At the close of the Sermon on the Mount, in the course of which he assumed the position of a Legisla-

tor, re-issuing laws, he foretells that, in the future, men would report that they had done wonders in his name; to whom he would say, "*I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity*"; while he proceeds to extol the wisdom of those who listened to his words, and obeyed them, as *builders on the Rock*. Now, would not both of these sayings, if pronounced by any Greek Sage, have been at once *condemned* as arrogant, and egotistic, in the last degree?

Then I find that shortly after this sermon was delivered (if not before it), a stranger came up to him and offered to cast in his lot with the new company, but desired first of all to obey his filial instincts, and go and bury his dead father. But Jesus would not permit him to follow these most natural and laudable human instincts: and, with an imperiousness—which on the hypothesis of his being merely this man's brother, is altogether unlovely, and repulsive—he tells him to leave the funeral obsequies to those whose spirits were not touched as his was, although they might be more distant in relationship. This is surely a cold-hearted and unfeeling requisition, and a most uncourteous allusion to the man's living relatives, *unless the speaker had a unique claim over him, due to his superhumanity*.

When the Jews asked him for "a sign," he replied—after drawing some historic parallels—"Behold a greater than Jonas, a greater than Solomon, is here."

He is told that his mother and brethren stand

outside a house where he is teaching, and desire to see him. He pays no attention to the request, but stretches out his hands over the crowd, and says, "Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? Whosoever shall do the will of my Father, the same is my brother and sister and mother."

There is a *superciliousness* in this language that is surely unlovely, if the speaker is merely human; the edge of which is not blunted—but rather sharpened—by such an additional saying as, "Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me." He says, "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father; but whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny." He calls some disciples together, men of various gifts (several not conspicuous for wisdom), and he sends them out to preach, and to do certain things, which, it is evident from the narrative, they did with exceedingly little success; and yet he tells them that if *they* are not received, and their words listened to, it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of Judgment than for those who should reject them. He adds, "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me. He that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me." Again, and more emphatically, "If any man come to me, and *hate* not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple."

Now, I am utterly *staggered* by these statements; and I must place the being *who dared to claim precedence in the affections of all mankind*—coming between the human heart and the objects of its tenderest regard—amongst the *fanatics of history*, unless he claimed this love from a consciousness of meriting it. He is utterly unworthy of my respect, unless he deserves my devotion. What right has an austere Galilean Rabbi to the first place in my regard, so that I am to love him more than wife, or child, or parent, *unless he transcends humanity altogether?*

Then, he promises that “those who have left house, or brethren, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, *for his sake*, shall receive a hundredfold more in this life” (I suppose in spiritual compensation), “and in the world to come life everlasting.” But what human being could dare to promise this, without atrocious arrogance? And who of us could ever possibly *trust the promise*, if he who made it were only one of ourselves?

Again, I read of a divine soliloquy in the course of which, with a pathetic sigh, he upbraided the cities in which his works were wrought, because they did not repent, telling his disciples that it would be more tolerable for places which the Jews had been taught to believe extremely wicked, than for them. Having said so, he thanked God that He had *hid* the mysteries of his Kingdom from conceited men, and added, “*All things are delivered*

unto me of my Father, and no man knoweth the the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son." And it is apparently on the strength of that assertion, or at least while raised by the thought he had thus expressed, that he invites the whole World of Humanity to find rest in Himself.

Then, in the information given to his auditors on one occasion that all sin and blasphemy against himself "as the Son of Man" would be forgiven, in contrast with blasphemy against the Spirit of God; what need of telling the Jews that blasphemy against himself would be forgiven, unless to guard them against a conclusion which they would themselves have naturally drawn?

Farther, I find a most assumptive and distasteful preaching of himself in all his Parables, if he was not worthy of being *their centre*, from an immeasurable superiority to his hearers. By regarding himself as the moral centre of the world's regard, he himself gave his disciples the key by which they could unlock the meaning of these parables. It was the Son of Man (the speaker) who was the great "sower who went forth to sow" in all soils; and, to take but another instance, it was he who was to "send forth his angels, to gather out of his kingdom all things that offend."

At Cæsarea Philippi he asked his disciples "Whom do men say that I, the son of man, am?" This question I cannot regard as evidence of vacillation

in his own self-consciousness. He did not put the question to ascertain the floating gossip of Galilee as to his own person. For he did not say, "Whom do men say that I am"; but "that *I, the son of man, am.*" No doubt we are dependent on the historian's accuracy in recording this saying; and it may be impossible to know whether it is faithfully reported or not. But these chronicles cannot be inaccurate *throughout*; and, on this occasion, Peter is reported as answering, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God." Whereupon Jesus accepts the testimony, blesses his witness-bearer, and tells him that "flesh and blood had not revealed it to him." By this I suppose he meant that the mere contemplation of his Humanity had not unfolded the secret. Then he calls this disciple a Rock, and tells him that his Church is founded on the rock of faithful human hearts; that "whatsoever it should bind on earth, would be bound in heaven"; and that "the gates of hell should not prevail against it." And in the rebuke, which followed immediately after this benediction—the disciple having been unable to prolong the higher insight, and sustain the reverence, descending to a lower level, where he tried to dissuade his Master from facing the perils of the future—we again discern the marvellous superiority, and the absolute ideal of a life "faithful unto death," which distinguished the Son of Man.

Again, he told his disciples that many prophets and righteous men had desired to see what they had

seen, and to hear what they had heard—and had not heard, or seen them—and he accordingly blessed these disciples; thus proclaiming himself heir to the predictions of the past, accepting the statement that he—a youth of thirty years—was “the Desire of all Nations,” and that in him the obscure longings and presentiments of Humanity, were realized. But, by what authority, and with what warrant—unless he was uniquely pre-eminent amongst men, and elevated above all in virtue of his identification with each—could he have ventured to do so?

Again, He told his followers that “if any should offend one of *the little ones who believed in him* it were better that he were drowned in the ocean.”

To the Pharisees he said, “What think ye of Christ? Whose son is he?” They say “David’s”; and he replies, “If David call him Lord, how is he his Son?” Surely here the question is put, and the reply given, with the intention of leading the Pharisees to conclude that he (the speaker) was super-human.

He forbade his followers to be called Rabbi, “for one was their Master, even Christ.” Does not this also indicate assumptiveness, if he was simply human?

[Pardon my reiteration of instances, for it is in its very cumulativeness that the argument is strong.]

He speaks of a Stone rejected by the Jewish builders, yet becoming the headstone of the corner: adding that “whosoever should fall on that stone

should be broken, but on whomsoever it should fall it would grind him to powder." I cannot see in these words anything to admire, but much to recoil from, unless they spring from a unique consciousness of superiority to the race. He says that "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but his words would not pass away"; a sentence which the three Synnotists all give in identical terms. He foretells to his disciples that they would be hated of all nations for his name's sake; and he says that the Son of Man shall yet "come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, and sit on the throne of his glory, and before him shall be gathered *all nations*."

Most remarkable, he not only announced that he was a King—but he promised a Kingdom to his disciples—bequeathing as a dying legacy to these wandering attendants from the sea of Galilee a more than royal inheritance. They who had been with him "in his temptations" were "to sit with him on thrones." What are we to make of such a promise as that? Is it poetic exaggeration? an outburst of rapturous enthusiasm? the lofty language of an excited visionary prophet? But it enters into details. It is calmly spoken, in circumstances of intensest sorrow; and when such things would seem less likely to have been St. Peter's fate than that he should sit on the throne of the Cæsars. Even were I able to construe his statements about a throne for himself, as the foresight of a marvellously

endowed prophet—the quickened second-sight of a spiritual seer, perceiving that the heritage of the future was his—how am I to interpret these reiterated assurances to his disciples that they too were to sit on thrones? twelve men of whose future the prophet of Nazareth could infer but little. The inspiration of the prophet may reveal to him his own influence over posterity; but could it tell him that twelve friends and pupils—many of them singularly obtuse and callous in their perceptions of his own nature—would also have such a heritage? *Such* a heritage! It is so great, that it must either have emanated from a fanatical brain, an imagination heated into wildest dreams which had an *egotistic* root—and were therefore base, and low-born—or from the prophetic heart and brain of One “who saw the end from the beginning.”

In instituting the simple Eucharistic Meal, by which his followers were to commemorate him, he calmly reckons on the remembrance of posterity, and anticipates its verdict. While he had already said of the Jewish Passover, that he would not again partake of it, till it was fulfilled in the Kingdom of God. At his trial, the high priest adjures him, by the living God, that he should say plainly whether he was Christ the Son of God. Jesus answered him, “Thou hast said; nevertheless, hereafter ye shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of Heaven.” To Pilate’s question, “Art thou the King of the Jews?”

he replies, "Thou sayest that I am a King. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice."

Then, in reference to the duration of a disciple's life, he said to another, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee, follow thou me." To an assembled group he says, "All power is given unto me, in heaven and on earth. Lo! I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

The list of passages from the *fourth* gospel is much longer, and they are much more direct and lofty in the claim advanced. But, keeping to the Synoptists—if we deduct all these sayings (and many others resembling them) what have we left? A few noble precepts, lofty ethical maxims, a course of teaching, and a style of action, which would indeed raise Jesus of Nazareth above the common level of humanity; but we must set over against these, *and deduct from them* all those instances of self-assertion which are (on the hypothesis of his being only one of ourselves) *transcendent audacity*. That self-assertion which is regarded as "not beautiful" and "not historical," is to me the very central feature of his character. I meet with it everywhere in the annals of his life. I cannot get away from it. It is the unfaltering assertion of his whole career. Whatever sentence uttered by him I read, whatsoever thing performed by him I ponder, there the assertion and proclamation of *himself* comes to the front, and into the fore-

ground. We must eliminate that altogether before we can accord to its claimant the title of *common respect*, if he was only human.

My contention is this. If you subtract all the instances in which that assertion is pre-eminent, and all the passages in which he advances the claim of originality, and un-indebtedness to the past, or announces his intention of uniting men to one another by first uniting them to himself, the excision is so great that what remains is a character inferior to that of many other prophets; while the intolerable egotism which some of these sayings carry with them, reduce him to a very low level indeed. I feel that my whole nature recoils from the position and moral attitude assumed by any brother-man, who addresses me in language of such extravagant pretensions; just as I feel that the egoists who surround me now are unworthy of my esteem, while they evoke my compassion. And I cannot get over the difficulty by interpreting those "mysterious and startling statements" as the rich colouring of eastern poetry, uttered by one who, though not divine, had the steady consciousness of moral power. They are so *prosaic*, in one sense so terribly literal—and given forth in terms so bare, unprefaced, unsoftened, unadorned—that I see no evidence of a departure on the speaker's part from the language of reality.

I cannot help thinking that there is truth in the idea I expressed in a former letter, that if we once concede that an incarnation of God is *possible*—as

the continuous and perfect inbreathing and replenishing of a human life with the utmost possible amount of Divinity—all these unique moral phenomena (otherwise so inexplicable) may be explained. Grant that an incarnation is possible, that God is not the slave of his own dignity, but that he *can* ally himself with human nature, fashioned in his image, by stooping to it; then, I think that the phenomena of the life of Jesus are the crowning manifestations of Divinity, the most illustrious display of its perfection.

The more I reflect upon this life, and especially when I remember the imperious autocratic element which runs through it as a golden thread, so uncompromising, so absolute; when I see this Rabbi, alone amongst the Prophets of Humanity, issuing *orders* to his disciples—not leaving it to their choice—to “follow himself”; when I find him demanding, as his natural right, the homage and self-surrender of posterity; when I find him laying it down—as an axiomatic truth in morals—that the “Categorical Imperative” for his disciples is simply an imitation of his own example, I am roused to protest, to rebel, and to cast these utterances aside as intolerable presumption, nay, as proud and narrow egotism, if he stands on the same platform of existence as myself, different only in the degree of his insight. I feel that he speaks to me, treats me, and advances a claim over me, such as no fellow-creature has any right to do. And so I cannot respect his humanity,

unless it is permeated and leavened by a divineness that is not mine.

I feel it a relief to the intellectual puzzle which this life presents,—with its singular array of opposites,—to turn from the Synoptics to the Fourth Gospel, where we find those more specific statements which clear up the speculative riddle by proclaiming the oneness of the Father and the Son. And again, when in other moods the dark enigma returns, and presses on me with its impenetrable gloom,—*e.g.* How *can* these two be one? How are they one? in *essence*? or in *character*? or both?—the enigmas with which my last letter dwelt—I find it a great relief to go back to the Synoptists; to read, to ponder, and to worship such a phrase as this, “No man knoweth the Father save the Son, *neither knoweth any man the Son, save the Father.*” It is a relief to hear such a sentence from the lips of him, who lived the life that stirs my wonder, and baffles my intellect, while it kindles in my heart the glow of adoration.

Pardon this long re-statement of an argument, which must be as familiar to you as it was lately novel to me.

I know there are more ways than one of looking on that wondrous Life which has drawn to it the admiration and the homage of ages, while subjected to the closest scrutiny and the concentrated gaze of generations; just as in the earliest band which gathered round that glorious Rabbi, there were

diversities of insight, recognition, and love. Though they all looked on one Master, each eye saw a different Christ, according to its power of vision.

There are many ways which conduct us to God. I only add that the outcome of any philosophical system to which I have as yet attained is this. To explain the phenomena of every life if possible as a development of anterior forces, along with new inspiration ; and, if historical criticism *can* thus explain the life of Christ, I am not only willing, but ready to assent to such an explanation. It would be a simpler hypothesis than that on which I am compelled to fall back, in as much as the latter postulates a uniqueness in this life which is without a parallel. But, it is because I find the hypothesis of his being "one of ourselves, no more," less adequate, *as an explanation of admitted facts*—and surrounded with greater difficulties to the speculative reason and heart together—that I do not adopt it ; notwithstanding the final mystery in which the counter hypothesis leaves us.

I am but a learner, as I hope for ever to remain ; and, slightly to change the words I quote, "forgetting the dogmas that are behind, I reach out to the Life that is before." I will greatly value any additional thoughts you may send me at your own leisure.

Yours, with the greatest esteem,

WILLIAM KNIGHT.

William Knight to James Martineau

[The early and later pages of this letter, returned to me by the Misses Martineau, have been unfortunately lost before transmission. The date is therefore wanting, and I cannot recall it.—W. K.]

IF we start with the assumption of a moral unity and reciprocity between God and man, we have only to suppose the fellowship to which that gives rise perfected, the oneness which follows from it complete, and we have the union of *two kindred natures in one person*. All that I find in the recorded personality of Jesus, is the record of an ideally perfect man; who is perfect because of the fulness with which God dwelt in him, and he in God. And thus we can understand (what is incomprehensible on the hard orthodox hypothesis) his growth towards perfection, its gradual steps. But when we proceed to ask whence came this ideal perfection in the personality of Jesus, and try to account for it, I am led to infer that the Divine nature descended into the human, in a manner altogether unique; not in the way of ordinary inspiration, by which I see that all prophets have been lifted to the higher levels of insight and attainment. For, if in every other prophet of

humanity we detect the presence of innumerable flaws, moral chasms, breaks of sympathy, provincialisms, inconsistencies, bias, &c. &c., are we not necessitated, as historical critics, to give a satisfactory account of the uniqueness which we find in him?

We cannot consistently leave it unexplained. Curiosity and scientific rigour, as well as reverence for this King of Humanity, demand some explanation. And if we admit the uniqueness that is claimed, and even concede that the moral phenomena *require* explanation, are we not shut up to the idea of his super-humanity, due to a special and continuous incarnation of God?

I do not think the term "*super-humanity*" very accurate, because it seems to remove its subject out of the category of mankind; while his superiority to all others consisted in the perfection of his humanity, and his supreme identification with every genuine phase of it. But this pre-eminence being conceded—of which in the sequel—and the antecedent influence of Jewish thought and life failing to account for it, and the inspiration of the prophet affording no true parallel, I fall back on the idea of *incarnation*, a direct, unique, unexampled emanation of the divine Essence within the limits of a human life, up to the full measure of its possibilities.

Here, however, I find a limit, which has been ignored by the Church, in framing the Creeds and Christological symbols of its faith. The Incarnation could only be a *moral* and *spiritual* manifestation.

Attributes of omniscience, omnipotence, and so forth, could not be revealed within a human life, from the *a priori* necessities of the case. But, while falling back on the idea of the Incarnation, I am forced to ponder the Divine Nature anew, to see whether this conception has a warrant in any characteristic of that nature; and I find a certain feature or phase of the Divine, which—in its very kindredness to the human—supplies that warrant, and provides for it. It was this that I attempted to state in my last letter. In that statement I can easily believe that I employed the “shifting phraseology” to which you refer, and used metaphor somewhat vaguely; the subject is so transcendent. Let me, however, restate my position briefly thus.

The analogy of the human is our only guide to a knowledge of the Divine. They are similar, though not the same; as type and archetype resemble, and yet differ. Since therefore human love has always an object beyond itself, divine affection must always have had a corresponding object. But the Universe of finite reality could not provide an adequate object, unless that Universe were itself eternal; and an eternal cosmos underneath, or exterior to, the living will of which it is the apocalypse, seemed to me to be destructive of the theistic postulate itself. I therefore concluded that *archetypally within the Divine nature itself*—not beyond it, exterior to it, or fashioned by it,—there was an object towards which the Divine Love flowed forth, and from which it again returned.

That this object should be "within the Divine nature itself" (that in fact the divine nature should include the object and the subject, at once of knowledge and of love,) seems to you to contradict the very analogy from which it is deduced. If both are within the Divine nature itself, the idea of this love passing forth from one centre, and returning to it from another, seems to you to reduce the love to a form of self-love; and thus to land its advocates in the very "solitude" and "selfishness" which the theory is devised to escape. And you contrast this mutual love of two functions, factors, or relations of one God, (which is incomprehensible) with "the mutual love of two Gods," which is comprehensible. But what I advocate is scarcely the mutual love of two "functions." It is one Love, in its upper and its under phase, in its forthflow to the *alter ego* and its return to itself; a reciprocity of life and of blessedness, into which temporal relations do not enter.

Since we are in the archetypal region, I do not feel the force of the objection that "unless the personality comes *twice over*, the relation of personal love cannot be." I do not see the necessity for assuming two persons at all. That would at once land its advocate in Ditheism. But holding as a primary and necessary postulate the oneness of the Divine personality, I fail to see that this unity excludes duality; a duality not of persons but of phases; two foci, let us call them. We are only

giving another name to a polytheistic hypothesis, if we speak of "three persons in one God," meaning by the term "person" what we mean when we apply it to a man. If, along with the Father, there were two beings, possessed of a separate self-consciousness, will, and personality, *there must have been three Gods*. I am convinced that a tripersonal monotheism is a logical contradiction. But then, is it necessary to assume (as that crass theory of the Trinity assumes) that there *were* three persons in one God? May we not substitute for it the doctrine that within the unity of the divine Essence there is a plurality of phases, a reciprocity, a "moral two-foldness manifesting unity," without transgressing any law of thought, or venturing on a mere airy hypothesis?

The word "person" seems to have been very misleading in the controversies which have been carried on regarding the Trinity. Am I not at liberty to attribute to it an archetypal and mystic significance when I carry it up from the human to the Divine? and may we not debar a logician from bringing forward the human analogy from which we start, when we tell him that—in the course of our ascent—we have leapt from that ladder, and done so intentionally, without taking a leap into total darkness? I remember how my teacher-friend—the late Dr. Duncan—refused to be bound by the trammels of a deductive logic, founded on the use of the word "person" amongst us, as if it must have precisely

the same signification when applied to the Divine nature, and to ours; and I do not detect any theoretical error in the position which claims a certain uniqueness of meaning in that word as applied to the Divine, which may be quite consistent with triplicity.

It is easy to drive the shallow dogmatic trinitarian into a corner by the logic which shows that, if two persons in God are like two persons in man, there must either be two Gods, between whom reciprocal love exists, or that the love of one is a form of self-love. But I have sometimes thought that the early Church only adopted the word "person" for want of a better. By the number of supplementary predicates or assertions, with which it surrounded that term in its creeds, some of the primitive theologians, and compilers of formulæ, seem to have guarded themselves against an absolute identification. This, of course, only applies to a few of the theologians. Were I to describe the doctrine I have stated as the mutual love of two functions, factors, or relations, I would define what is a hypothesis left undefined. It is confessedly a mystery, beyond the cognisance of the "understanding"; and is apprehensible only by the higher "reason," or intuition, the rationale of which escapes definition altogether.

But it seemed to me that there was no greater (though an equal) mystery in it, than in the relation which subsists between the subject and the object of finite knowledge. The object of his knowledge is

beyond the knower, and yet it comes within the ken of his faculties; just as the object of affection is beyond the being who loves, and yet is embraced by his regard. Nay, is not *all* knowledge a knowledge of differences? We know self only in its contrast with what is not self, good in its contrast with evil, beauty in opposition to ugliness, and the infinite Intelligence in its antithesis to the finite.

In like manner we love what lies beyond ourselves, and yet our love brings that object within ourselves. In the Divine I cannot see that there would be love at all, did it not radiate forth from a centre, and light upon another. But it does not necessarily follow that that other was a separate being, bounded off and distinct, as one human being is separate from another. When human beings love each other, the affection which unites them is an inbreathing of the one Divine Essence, and it requires two beings (the subject and the object, the active and the passive element) to complete it. In seeking out the archetype of that Love, which existed prior to its manifestation in humanity, must we not find something similar, though not identical? If I may again speak without irreverence in the language of inadequate symbol—a movement as between the two foci of a gigantic ellipse, or the eternal *systole* and *diastole* of the Divine affection.

To satisfy the exigencies of infinite Love you find in the present universe, and in all its past phases in perpetual series, the object which I have been led

to seek within the Divine Essence itself. But it is precisely because I feel that the notion of an eternal universe would seriously *weaken* the force of the theistic faith, that I feel impelled to believe in a time when the universe was not: and it is to satisfy the exigencies of infinite Love *then*, that I find its object within the Divine Essence itself. Here I may be quite wrong. The whole region is dim with haze. But it seems to me that to postulate Matter, as an eternal entity alongside of the living Will, which we now see revealed in the multitudinous life and protean forces of the Universe, reduces the Divinity to something very like the essence of matter.

I do not lay stress on the idea of creative origination, from a fear that we should not discern a living Will behind phenomena to-day, unless we get behind them to an epoch when they were not; and that to escape from Atheism we require to postulate "chaos at the far end of time." I have indeed been taught by your own *Essays*, more than by any other philosophical literature, to interpret the forces of the present Universe as the outcome and revelation of a living Will. But does not the "causal instinct of the intellect" lead us to a *Causa causans*, not as an "eternal process moving on," "beginning unbegun," but as an emanating Force; and the universe as an actual emanation from that force. I do not think that this idea is necessarily pantheistic; while the conception of "created beings in perpetual series" seems to me seriously to limit the Infinite.

He now works with the fetters of a Universe surrounding him, unless it started into being from his free causal activity. The quantity of material in the universe neither increases nor diminishes. It is only undergoing endless kaleidoscopic change. But, if it never emerged from the causality of a supreme Will, would it not be a perpetual protest against the supremacy of Mind or Spirit? The eternal element would then be *Spirit, plus Matter*.

But to return to the manifestation of Divinity within the humanity of Jesus. At the close of your letter, you refer to the old monophysite and monothelite controversies; and, amongst several alternative positions, you ask, "was the eternal Son co-present in the body of Jesus, with a human mind and will? Then, either the eternal Son was not personal, or there were two persons in the visible form of Jesus." I think the former of these suppositions, that the eternal son was not personal, the only rational hypothesis.

I have much sympathy with the way in which Rothe has developed the theology of Schleiermacher on this point. Schleiermacher surely did much to lay the basis of a rational theology as to the person of Christ. We cannot say so much in favour of the development which his system received at the hands of Thomasius. The theory of *κρύψις* or *κένωσις* adduced to explain these phenomena of the life of Jesus, which seem inconsistent with the presence of Divinity, surely breaks down alto-

gether. To suppose that the second person within a Trinity stripped himself, at a fixed point or date in time, of the attributes of his ante-mundane state; and—denuded of these—appeared simply as an exalted supernatural prophet, gets us away from the rock Scylla only to plunge us into the whirlpool Charybdis. For if the *κένωσις* be absolute, the eclipse of the Divine is total; and while we discern nothing in the Life suggesting such concealment, (a concealment which to me would savour less of the divine, than of the diplomatic), the gap between them is in no sense crossed or got over, the chasm is not bridged, by this supposition; nor is the union of "two natures in one person" rendered a whit more conceivable by the presence of one of them in this latent unmanifested state. Besides the theory gratuitously supposes that some of the divine attributes were laid aside, but not all—that omniscience and omnipotence were parted with, but not unchangeableness; or rather the theory demands that this attribute is to be included within the divine renunciation, while it is a logical contradiction to apply the notion of *κένωσις* to *that* aspect of the Infinite.

I think that Dorner in further developing the theology of Schleiermacher has avoided the rock on which the theory of Thomasius suffers shipwreck; but to my mind he strands himself in the shallows of an opposite theory. The union of the two natures being the result of a process of moral identification,

not of mechanical synthesis (like the *συνάφεια* of Nestor) is thus an organic growth. The incarnation being progressive, not complete at the birth of Jesus but only at the close of his life, the divine element developed itself within his human consciousness according as he was able to receive it, gradually leavening it, till he became absorbed by the Divine. But, as the theory of *κένωσις* implies the sudden descent of a maimed Divinity within the enclosure of the human consciousness, this implies the ultimate abolition of that consciousness, and the substitution in its place of the Divine, a theory not essentially distinct from the Monarchian or Patripassian dogma of earlier centuries.

But has not Rothe succeeded in steering a middle course between extremes? So far as I am able to understand him, I am inclined to agree with Rothe. I do not see any warrant for our attributing a subtle hypostasis to Christ distinct from his human personality. But in that personality I find the meeting place of the Divine and the human, because I find the ideal made real; and, so far as we can speak of it at all, I think we may assert that the *Logos ever was, and always is, impersonal*. It everlastingly is and has been a phase of Divine manifestation. It is only in the moral region that I can have any conception at all of the union of the divine and the human. In the life of Jesus I see the progressive unfolding of that union, growing with his growth, strengthening with his strength, ripening with his

development. I see no difference in kind, but only in degree, between that union in him and in others.

He began life with that union immature. He had to conquer every inch of territory for himself, and had to reach perfection by a life of effort. God was progressively incarnate in him. And he is the Son of God, not in virtue of two separate natures, but of two different sides or relations of the same nature. He is the "Son of God" as the perfect copy of the archetype, the "express image of his person." He is "the son of man," as the type of ideal humanity. Thus the Divine and the Human in Jesus correspond to the ideal and the real [the term *ὑπόστασις* of which Christ is said (by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews) to be the *χαρακτήρ* is surely nothing else than the underlying essence, the occult transcendental background, or (to put it otherwise) the real *noumenal* element: and as the *χαρακτήρ* the outward mark or sign or mirror the *phenomenal* revelation of the *ὑπόστασις*].

The co-existence of the divine and the human in his life is evidenced only in the ideal development of that life. It is the uniqueness of his humanity that is the evidence of *its* divinity. The orthodox conception of his divinity reduces his humanity to a mere skeleton framework for the setting of that divinity. Either the humanity was a mere veil, or mechanically worn raiment, under which Divinity lived and moved; or it was a growth, a moral development from first to last; and his Divinity was

the underlying leaven, or interior pulse of a perfected development. Thus—in realizing the Divine indwelling in the life of Jesus—we cannot, and we do not need to, pass beyond the limits of the moral and the spiritual. Christ, we may fearlessly affirm, was neither omnipotent nor omniscient; for these are attributes which could not possibly reveal themselves within the boundaries of a human life. The conditions of finite existence preclude it; and—were it conceivable that omniscience and omnipotence could be incarnate—for *precisely the same reason* omnipresence could be localized, and unchangeableness would grow and shift from state to state.

It is only morally that Jesus of Nazareth was, or could be, a revelation of “the fulness of the Godhead bodily”; because his soul was the native home of love and of holiness, of trust submission and inextinguishable zeal. As a perfect mirror of humanity, he was divine; and his supreme humanity is at once the index, and the measure, of his Divinity. We thus escape from the perplexity caused by the theory of the “two natures in one person,” and the alternate action and reaction of the one upon the other. In a retrospective study of the life we see that it was human, but all that we see is Divine; while humanity is beheld by us as the appropriate and highest organ for the manifestation of Divinity. The unique pre-eminence of Christ remains.

I know that I am here met by an objection—one’s own questionings at once suggest it—viz. this,

if that be all, why adopt a theory of Incarnation, when you deny the descent of a separate personality? Will not inspiration, the inspiration of the divine essence visiting the soul of Jesus, and filling it without measure, account for all the uniqueness you witness in his life? So that the theory of his super-humanity is at least non-essential.

In answer I think not, because the phenomena to be explained are absolutely unique. The life is ideal. There is no second like it. And we have no evidence that the inspiration which lifts men to the higher levels of insight and attainment—all inferior to his—is competent to the larger task of *perfecting* an individual. I think it very remarkable that while Jesus cannot be classed with the "sons of men," he claims the homage the love and the worship of the world, not in virtue of his divine origin, but in virtue of his exalted humanity, and his power to help men who are burdened and tempted as he was. But, while he does not ground his claims on his Divinity, he presents us on the one hand with a faultlessly ideal humanity, and on the other with a claim to pre-eminence which is all the stronger that it is invariably implied when not assumed; a claim which runs through his life from first to last, and which would amount to the most arrogant and reprehensible egotism, if the claimant did not sustain a peculiar and unique relation to the Divine.

The singularity of those phenomena in the life of

Jesus, their being absolutely unparalleled, so far as I can read History, convinces me that they could not have arisen as human character is normally developed, by the educative influences of the past, by the energy of a will unusually pliant, and a conscience unusually vigilant, and the daily inspiration of Heaven. Of course, if you can shew me that I exaggerate the elevation, the loveliness, and the perfect moral symmetry and unapproachable grandeur of this life, my conclusion is invalid. And I enter on the enquiry I trust free from bias and ready for any disclosure which might reverse the faith of past years, if it be made out from the records that have come down to us.

Since receiving your letter I have read over the Gospels, and especially the Synoptists, more than once, with a view to revise my conviction from its basis. You will believe that I did not search for proofs of a foregone theory; for in the prosecution of this enquiry I had *no* theory, but merely read with open eye to see what these mysterious sayings of Christ's amount to, and how his character may best be explained as a historical phenomenon. And, at the risk of being tedious, I will restate some of the results of this late perusal of the records.

In my last letter I mentioned that the moral phenomena of Christ's life would not of themselves have enabled me to infer an incarnation of God (though they conclusively establish a humanity not propagated from the past) had not Christ given us

the clue in such words as "I and my Father are one." But from the fact that these words, and similar ones, are taken from the Fourth Gospel you argue that until that Gospel is proved to be historical, we cannot found anything upon the statements it contains. But, is it not one thing to admit that we could not have risen to a truth, had it not been enunciated or suggested to us, and to maintain, along with this, that having been once suggested, its power to explain facts in History otherwise inexplicable is an argument in its favour? and another thing to say that the truth is absolutely dependent on that suggestion or enunciation, so that, if the source of the suggestion be proved unauthentic, all evidence of its truth disappears? The light having once been struck, it matters little what degree of credibility is to be attached to those who kindled it, *the product remains*. For my part I cannot look upon these Biblical Records as more authentic *a priori* than any other fragments of ancient History; though I think we have intrinsic evidence that they *contain* the story of a life absolutely unique. And in this instance the fact of the attestation seems to me to be evidence of the truth attested.

I cannot conceive of these sayings, recorded in the gospels, having grown out of the retrospective adoration of friends and biographers, who idealized Jesus from a distance. Were they in the line of our Humanity's most cherished ideals? If, in the first instance, we set aside the Fourth Gospel and

keep to the Synoptists, collecting the passages where the claim of superhumanity is either directly made or indirectly implied; and then proceed to eliminate all these, or set them down as the exaggerations of loving disciples, I think the excision is so great, and the residue so small, that instead of amounting to a living portrait of ideal excellence—the “consummate flower” of spiritual Judaism—we have only a degenerate plant from a Galilean *hortus siccus*. On the other hand, admitting their authenticity, the chasm seems to me to be altogether impassable between that character and the highest type of human excellence disclosed to us elsewhere. To suppose him to be *Elias Redivivus*, or but a higher type of the later Isaiah, seems to me inadmissible; the interval between them is so wide. The difference is constitutional, and as absolute as the limits of humanity admit of.

* * * * *

[Not only is the final part of this letter lost; but, what is much more important, Dr. Martineau's reply has not been recovered.]

James Martineau to William Knight

GLANGWYNNANT

NEAR BEDDGELERT

CARNARVONSHIRE

July 6, 1872

My dear Mr. Knight,

In the midst of the last London complications before my escape hither, I have been thinking much of your impending affair in the Presbytery meeting on the 9th inst., and have looked in vain through the *Scotsman* for any anticipatory notice of the probable turn which the movement may take. Meanwhile, a curious little fact has been brought to my knowledge, of which it is just possible that some use might be made in your defence. My attention has been drawn to it by my friend Mr. W. J. Lamport, of Liverpool. Near the beginning of Dr. Hanna's *Life of Chalmers*, are extracts from a diary and letters, describing a visit to Liverpool, when Chalmers accepted an invitation from Mr. Yates to preach in Paradise Street Chapel. He afterwards reflects with regret on the responsibility he has undertaken, but for no other reason than that his broad Scotch accent might be offensive to Mr. Yates' refined and intellectual con-

gregation. In commenting on this fact, Mr. Lamport says,—“The congregation of Paradise Street was probably then more distinctively Unitarian than that of Little Portland Street is now. Chalmers was not likely to have been misled by any lingering use of the word ‘Presbyterian,’ because he mentions Mr. Kilpatrick, then minister of the Oldham Street Scotch Church, and it is improbable that he could have been ignorant of the theological changes among English Presbyterians.” Mr. Lamport adds, “I am writing from memory, not having access to the book: but I think it does not state whether Chalmers did or did not actually preach at Paradise Street.”

It certainly tells rather strikingly that the chief Founder of the Free Kirk engaged to preach in the very pulpit which I occupied during the first eighteen years of my English ministry. Mr. Yates to whose invitation he yielded was the father of Mr. James Yates, Dr. Wardlaw’s opponent in the Glasgow “Socinian” controversy. His daughter, still living on the paternal estate near Liverpool, is one of the most respected and beloved members of the Hope Street congregation; and may very possibly have some record, if not memory, of the fact mentioned in Dr. Hanna’s Life.

I do not suppose that much respect would be paid by a Scotch Presbytery to Transatlantic precedents. But I well remember that an American clergyman (a Mr. Wilkinson), an orthodox Presbyterian, once preached for me in Paradise Street Chapel, Liverpool.

I had procured him some support for a mixed school of black and white children. But he knew perfectly well that we were Unitarians: and his sermon had no reference to his philanthropic object. Mr. Lamport says, "I have still a painful recollection of its dryness."

We arrived (*i.e.* my wife, and Edith, and I,—the others to follow later) last evening; descending from the pass of Pen-y-Gwryd during the most gorgeous sunset, sending its glories through the transverse valleys of Snowdon. Our little cottage, planted on a platform of rock which has furnished its material, and flanked by a wooded hillside, looks down over its garden lawn and shrubberies on the lake about fifty feet below, and on the river issuing from it, which gleams at intervals through the trees, and makes its flow audible all night. It is a lovely spot, and seems to waken one into the real world, and dismiss the London noise as a troubled dream. Yet I must not speak ungratefully of the agitating interests of my last week in town. For among them was one,—of which perhaps you will shortly see some notice in the public prints,—that could not fail to affect me with grateful surprise. A number of friends, desiring to secure to me a period of un-anxious life at the close, and to place something in my power for my children, have presented me with a purse of 5,000 guineas and a piece of memorial plate; excusing their benevolence by the pretext that, had I been in one of [the] secular professions,

I should have been in a position to make affluent provision for my family. The letter of gift has not yet been addressed to me: and till it comes and receives my answer, the matter remains nominally private: but the number of persons concerned prevents its being really so. I was utterly astonished and confounded, and at first feared that a false impression of my affairs must have been given by the fact of my daughters having, each of them, a professional pursuit. But I found it to be quite understood that this was due to their choice, and not to my necessities; and that I had no want or ambition of the external kind that was not satisfied. In short, it was simply that the generosity of my friends had desired for me more than I had ever dreamed of desiring for me and mine. I shall have to consider how far this new trust,—for such it is,—may alter the duties of my remaining years.

About Herbert Spencer's paper I should have distrusted my own judgment, had it not been confirmed by yours. The very slight impression it produced on me made me fear that I could not have thoroughly understood it: for I cannot help looking up to him as to a superior intelligence, whose apprehensions have always a presumption in their favour against my own. But on the other hand I see that he has been so full of his own last expositions of his doctrine, as to suppose himself the object of attack in my paper and to read between the lines criticisms which I had never thought

of; and that this personal susceptibility has interfered with his grasp of the argument as a whole, and misled him into a set of irrelevant and not always candid strictures on collateral issues. I have not entirely abandoned the idea of some reply: and in a day or two, when I get my goods unpacked and in order, I hope to look the matter in the face, and, if it seems desirable, prepare a few pages for the next *Contemporary*.

I do not forget how this ecclesiastical crisis must add to the thousand claims upon your time. Yet I shall hope for *some* report, be it only in a newspaper, of the proceedings of the 9th,—addressed to me at Glangwynnant, Beddgelert, Carnarvonshire. With our united kindest regards,

Believe me ever,

Yours most truly,

JAMES MARTINEAU.

* * * * *

James Martineau to William Knight

GLANGWYNNANT, BEDDGELERT

CARNARVONSHIRE

July 17, 1872

My dear Mr. Knight,

Keen as the interest has been with which I have followed these deplorable proceedings in Presbytery, I have thought it well to hold my peace till their close. The result is in every way what I expected. Your defence is without a fault, except in its excessive generosity towards me; of which I will say no more than that it humbles me, yet moves me to a deeper self-dedication. But I do not think it is possible to present the principles of Christian fellowship in a nobler or more persuasive form than that which they assume in your address. They stand there independent, as they ought to be, of dogmatic sympathy: and resting upon the common personal relation of the spiritual children of God to the Heavenly Father whom they seek with meditation and prayers and tears. And the firmness with which you announce the ground and bearing of your act is the more telling from the absence of any ungentle or reproachful word.

I cannot think how you could maintain so calm and sweet a mood through all the provocations of orthodox arrogance and stupidity. The report in yesterday's *Scotsman* reminded me of the account which Schleiermacher gives in one of his letters of a clerical meeting; which transported him, he says, at once out of the sphere of intelligence and character into a special world of mental darkness and moral meanness. Our own theological meetings I find disheartening enough. But the Dundee Free Presbytery makes them look a little brighter.

Should your statement reappear, perhaps you would, in a note or otherwise, correct one sentence, which,—probably through my fault,—leaves a false impression. The old Paradise Street Chapel, where Chalmers (in his unregenerate days!) engaged to preach, was no more pledged to Unitarianism than my present chapel: *none* of our old chapels are, and scarce any of the new. In saying that the congregation of Mr. Yates was more characteristically Unitarian than mine, I only meant (or rather Mr. Lamport, for it was his expression) that the adoption of Unitarian doctrine being then recent and pronounced, the peculiarity was prominently present both to the public mind and to the habitual feeling of the congregation.

It is most satisfactory that you are sustained by your own congregation. But it seems evident that they will have to choose between their Free Kirk connexion, and their minister: and I can imagine

that you may feel it a serious question, whether it is better to go out individually, or to take them with you. In a country so ecclesiastically organised as Scotland, the position of isolated congregations is not desirable or hopeful; and a minister who once commits himself to the creation of such a society becomes more bound to it than is consistent with the proper freedom of an enlarging life. The relation is apt to have the cruel effect of an imprudent marriage, which may oppress many a good possibility, but cannot be dissolved. I cannot judge of local conditions so far out of sight. But my impression is strong, that you will need more scope for intellectual and spiritual movement than could be found in the pastorate of a society standing alone, and rendered liberal, probably, chiefly by personal attachment and deference to yourself.

I do not think that either the framers or the opposers of the Resolution of Presbytery appreciate the fact that "*the Unitarian Body*" which you are required to denounce as no part of the Christian Church has no existence. There is no such "Denomination"; if there were, not for an hour would I belong to it. There are a number of worshipping societies, principally composed of descendants of Presbyterian nonconformists, in which the majority or the whole of the members have ceased,—it may be permanently or it may be only for a time,—to be Trinitarian: but the extent of their deviation from the old theology is of every variety;—is wholly undefined by accepted or unaccepted formulas; and is

in no sense, beyond that of natural sympathy, a condition of membership or communion. There is as much reason for calling the Greyfriars congregation, or that of any Broad-Churchman, "Unitarian," as for calling mine so. It is therefore not a "Body" of people, but a *theology* distributed among persons in various ecclesiastical affiliation, which you are called on to denounce. And even if it were not monstrous to impose a new article of faith on you, you would be entitled to have an accurate definition of the theology you are to denounce as beyond the limits of Christianity.

I had written thus far when the postboy brought in your most interesting Railway letter. I hastily answer the chief question. *I would publish* the Portland Street Sermon; and boldly throw it down as an example of what you claim the right and duty of preaching in relation to the wants and aspirations of the time. It would never do to let it be dragged from you with apparent reluctance. I am very glad that you are conferring with Dr. Wallace. I only hope that the case will not be driven too much on to mere *legal* grounds; but will maintain its vast significance as representing a principle momentous to the future of the church.

The postboy is at hand, and I finish hastily: but shall probably write a supplement when I can collect my thoughts on matters not yet touched.

Ever faithfully yours,

JAMES MARTINEAU.

James Martineau to William Knight

GLANGWYNNANT, BEDDGELERT

CARNARVON

August 7, 1872

My dear Mr. Knight,

I have been rather idly waiting for some adequate occasion to follow up my last hasty letter with a Postscript, when your Sermon* and the *Contemporary*† combine to wake me up, and overcome my habitual epistolary inertia. My joy at the publication of the former, as the surest way of shaming opposition, is lost in the higher interest of the sermon itself; the reading of which more than renews the intense sympathy with which I heard it. If it does not convert * * *, he shall be to me "a heathen man and a publican": only, in that case, I fear you will say that it has inadequately converted me. The witness to God which arises at the point where our moral freedom enters (p. 23) is presented by you in a way which to me is new and highly interesting. I find it most

* See pp. 119-133.

† August, 1872, containing an article on "The Ethics of Creed-Subscription." See pp. 134-152.

difficult to convey to others the deep conviction I feel, that in the life of Conscience there is a real Communion between the Divine and the Human spirit; and every turn of thought which helps to this is as a flash that shows the way at midnight.

It is however only to the solemn beauty and inward truth of the sermon that I should trust for the softening of opponents' hearts. If they are hard enough to carry a critical dissection into its theology, it can hardly be denied that its whole tone, and the relation in which it exhibits the human soul and God, are quite at variance with the Calvinistic theory of the world, which the Free Kirk adopts as its basis;—not only deviating from it here and there, but proceeding throughout on the directly opposite doctrine respecting human nature and the Divine economy. To me, and so I suppose to your censuring brethren, the sermon is the outbreathing of a totally different religion from theirs;—thought by thought, almost phrase by phrase, the affirmation or the implication of everything which they deny: and the more profoundly it speaks to me, the less surprised am I that it should be uncongenial to their orthodox instinct. They doubtless feel that the mere doctrine of the Trinity, and the belief in an historical Incarnation, divorced from the scheme of ruin and redemption which gives them their part to play in the drama of the world, lose their significance and almost their identity, and cease to be the symbols of any common faith; the

meaning which they have for you being quite other than that which is paramount with them. I do not expect therefore that over the chasm which divides you from them any practicable bridge can be built. It could be constructed only out of the ruins of their theology.

Your paper on "Creed-subscription"* enables me to understand, better than before, how you can retain your place in a Church which I cannot but regard as spiritually foreign to you. With the conservative and historical sentiment of the paper, the clinging to hereditary religion, the reform by growth and fall of the withered leaves rather than by the arrogance of new creation, the preference of a reverent latitude over the clatter of logical dissidence and conceit,—I am in entire accord. But your whole argument convinces me that, to secure the just satisfaction of this sentiment, the only method which does not tamper with veracity is to get rid of Creed-subscription altogether. It is perhaps due to my nonconformist training and habit, that the Broad Church laxity in the interpretation of ecclesiastical engagements so distresses my spirit. Whatever *might*, under a different system, be meant by Creed-subscription, it actually does mean, and is taken by all Courts to mean, an engagement to teach within the limits of the doctrinal scheme which the Creed defines; as a condition of office in the corporate body which accepts the offered

* See p. 134.

services. From this engagement I see no way of release, more than from other engagements, except by mutual consent: the individual cannot change the terms and release himself. If the contract be, as you intimate, one which, so taken, it was wrong or absurd to make, this surely is a reason, not for violating it or for substituting on his own authority a sensible engagement which was *not* made; but for escaping from an obligation which he is not in a condition to discharge. Beyond this simple ethical solution I cannot see my way: and the circuits by which it is escaped appear to me only to bewilder the problem, and twist a very plain track of duty into an inextricable labyrinth.

The three assumptions on which your argument proceeds are no doubt true propositions; and, if true, render rigorous Creed-engagements unreasonable and wrong. But every one of them would have been vehemently denied by the Church legislators who imposed the creeds. They certainly composed their definitions as (for the ends of Salvation) an adequate account of the Divine scheme or dealings with men. They did expect the assent of every individual member to these definitions. And they looked on them as the unchangeable truth of God, "the same yesterday, to-day, and forever." Only under these conceptions could the Creed-system have either origin or justification: the absoluteness, the uniformity, the perpetuity, of a certain Saving Belief, are the postulates of every Church Council that has left us

a Symbol for ecclesiastic use. Were it otherwise, how could the Athanasian Creed sentence to perdition all who did not accept its account of the Trinity? and the other Creeds assume the person of each individual worshipper, "I believe," etc.? and the Church of England require "ex animo assent and consent" to all that is contained in the Creeds, Articles, and Liturgy; and stipulate that "no man shall draw an Article aside any way, but shall submit to it in the plain and full meaning thereof; and shall not put his own sense or comment to be the meaning of the Article, but shall take it in the literal and grammatical sense"? The idea of growth and change in apprehension of Divine things,—as a condition to be provided for,—was wholly absent from the Founders of our Churches; and fatally conflicts with the fundamental compacts on which those Churches rest. Of course, I agree with you that we must now provide for the fact of growth and relativity in our religious conceptions: but to do so, within the limits of the old compacts, by leaving the individual to break what he thinks proper and keep the rest, seems to me ethically inadmissible: and I am sure that it is socially demoralising. The feeling with which honourable and highminded laymen are beginning to look at the liberal clergy as men who conform and know better, and who introduce evasions into the highest offices of life, is at once natural and disastrous. The intellectual sympathy which is felt for them perplexes, without satisfying, the moral estimate of

their position: and I perceive everywhere the suspicion spreading that somehow Religion can always command a store of Academic subtleties which, if not needed for defence of absurd doctrine, can be used in excuse for questionable action. For what purpose a Church can legislatively adopt a dogmatic creed or code, if not to secure uniformity of teaching to that extent and allow variety only beyond it, I find it, in common with most people, impossible to conceive: and if the practice is not to answer these ends, if the individual is to have his liberty within, as well as without, the code which he subscribes, the whole *raison d'être* of the system disappears. An obligation which is not to bind had better not be incurred.

The argument of expediency,—that no Church can be reformed except from within,—always strikes me as involving very singular readings of history. I am not aware of any Church that,—in the sense required, of altering a dogmatic basis,—has ever reformed itself, either from within or from without. Every great birth or revolution of dogma, *i.e.* every one great enough to require new creeds, has had to constitute a new Church as its organ. The Church of Rome would not take up the Anglican modifications: or the Anglican adopt the Puritan, the Quaker, the Wesleyan: the Lutherans had to separate from the Catholics, and themselves would not make room for the Reformed: and so on, all round. Every one of these separate Churches retains to this hour its

doctrinal symbols as settled in the crisis of its first growth: the only variations being the mere wavering of the forces which moulded it before it fully set, and not modifications arising from later developments. The new wine has always required new bottles. It is not to Erasmus, but to Luther, that God has given the modern world.

I must own therefore that, ingenious and interesting as your paper is, it does not cast out the obstinate devil of my nonconformity, nay, I fear you will think that it brings back seven other evil spirits, more wicked than the first, and leaves me in desperate case. However, it is only when it comes to argument on principles, that the Huguenot spirit I inherit wakes within me. With the difficulties of each concrete problem I feel the most entire,—I could almost say afflicted,—sympathy. I am most anxious to learn whether any new light has arisen from your intercourse with Dr. Wallace; and what moves you can see before you in the affair of the September Presbytery. What is to come next, if you do not comply, and they do not recede? Will *they* carry the case to the higher court, in the hope of finding an enforcing authority? Or, will they simply pass a Resolution of stronger censure, for *you* to appeal against?

I fear that, as you will hardly wish at present to have a Sunday at Liverpool, there is but little hope of our seeing you here. Else, how delighted I should be to have a ramble with you on the

Snowdon ridges ; or to row you on the lake, while you made better use of my fishing rod than it will ever have in my hands ! Unfortunately my house has no spare room : but there is a little inn about a mile off where a bed can be had for a friend. On the 19th we move to the neighbourhood of Dolgelly, where the conditions will probably be the same. I am much better ; but still shrink from the usual amount of work.

With united kindest regards,

Ever faithfully yours,

JAMES MARTINEAU.

ADDRESS
PRESENTED TO
JAMES MARTINEAU, D.D., LL.D.
ON HIS EIGHTY-THIRD BIRTHDAY
APRIL 21, 1888
WITH
LIST OF SIGNATURES

IT occurred to some of Dr. Martineau's friends to present him with a Congratulatory Address on the occasion of his eightieth birthday. Several reasons prevented its realization at that particular time, and it was ultimately thought best by those chiefly interested in the matter to postpone it until the completion of the two great works which it was understood Dr. Martineau intended to publish before long.

On the appearance of the *Study of Religion* at the beginning of the year 1888, it was felt that no time should be lost in endeavouring to carry out the original idea, and that Dr. Martineau's eighty-third birthday should not pass without the presentation to him of an Address bearing upon his long life of honoured usefulness. I accordingly drew it up and forwarded it to the Master of Balliol College, Oxford, who revised and re-cast it. It is to Mr. Jowett that the form which the Address ultimately assumed is due.

There was comparatively little time between the date on which it was completed, and the 21st April—when it had to be presented—for getting it printed and distributed to friends in Britain, the Continent of Europe, and America; and the work had to be done, not only in haste, but also almost without

co-operation, by those who severally promoted it, as they happen to live in widely distant parts of the country. This will explain the variety of the ways in which the signatures to the Address have been written. Some have given their names only ; others, their names, titles, and addresses. These were cut off from the printed copy of the Address, which had been sent to each for signature, and put into the Album ultimately presented to Dr. Martineau, almost in the order in which they were received ; and they are printed, in the pages which follow, as they were inserted in the album. Had there been longer time in which to carry it out, a somewhat more definite, or at least a more uniform plan would have been adopted from the first ; but there may be a certain interest to those who signed the Address in the very miscellaneousness which they see in the signatures appended to it.

Sufficiently striking it is that from the most opposite quarters in the literary, scientific, political, and religious world, so many have united in offering this tribute of respect to the work and the character of Dr. Martineau. Few of his contemporaries could call forth a suffrage so wide and so spontaneous. It must be added that there are many—both in this country and abroad—whose names do not appear in the following list, who would have gladly signed it had they been asked to do so ; or who, had they known of its being in preparation, would probably have sent in their names to be added to the list. It was impossible, however, for the promoters of the Address to remember every one, and for the omission of any friend of Dr. Martineau which may have occurred they are extremely sorry.

Dr. Martineau's reply is appended to the list of names ; and to make sure that all who signed the Address should also know of the reply, it has been privately printed, and a copy is now sent to each of the subscribers.

TO

JAMES MARTINEAU, D.D., LL.D.

WE desire to express to you, on your eighty-third birthday, the feelings of reverence and affection which are entertained towards you, not only by your own Communion, but by members of other Christian Churches who are acquainted with your character and writings.

We thank you for the help which you have given to those who seek to combine the love of truth with the Christian life: we recognize the great services which you have rendered to the study of Philosophy and Religion: and we congratulate you on having completed recently two great and important works, at an age when most men, if their days are prolonged, find it necessary to rest from their labours.

You have taught your generation that, both in politics and religion, there are truths above party, independent of contemporary opinion, and which cannot be overthrown, for their foundations are in the heart of man; you have shewn that there may be an inward unity transcending the divisions of the Christian World, and that the charity and sympathy of Christians are not to be limited to those who bear the name of Christ; you have sought to harmonize the laws of the spiritual with those of the natural world, and to give to each their due place in human life; you have preached a Christianity of the spirit, and not of the letter, which is inseparable from morality; you have spoken to us of a hope beyond this world; you have given rest to the minds of many.

We admire the simple record of a long life passed in the strenuous fulfilment of duty, in preaching, in teaching the young of both sexes, in writing books of permanent value, a life which has never been distracted by controversy, and in which personal interests and ambitions have never been allowed to have a place.

In addressing you we are reminded of the words of Scripture, "His eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated," and we wish you yet a few more years both of energetic thought and work, and of honoured rest.

TENNYSON.

ROBERT BROWNING.

B. JOWETT, Balliol College, Oxford.

G. G. BRADLEY, Dean of Westminster.

Dr. E. ZELLER, Prof. Phil., Berlin.

F. MAX MÜLLER.

J. R. LOWELL.

J. R. SEELEY.

W. E. H. LECKY.

EDWIN ARNOLD.

FRANCIS WILLIAM NEWMAN.

THEODORE MARTIN.

Lady MARTIN.

ANNA SWANWICK.

ELGIN.

J. H. STIRLING.

LEWIS MORRIS.

ANDREW CLARK, Bart.

E. RENAN.

STOPFORD A. BROOKE.

LEONARD COURTNEY, M.P.

RODEN NOEL.

JOHN LUBBOCK, Bart., M.P.
 CHARLES NICHOLSON, Bart., late Chancellor of the
 University of Sidney.
 SARAH E. NICHOLSON.
 W. F. POLLOCK, Bart., Trinity College, Cambridge.
 Lady POLLOCK.
 EMMA LINGEN.
 PHILIP MAGNUS.
 OWEN ROBERTS.
 FRANCES POWER COBBE.
 MARY CHARLOTTE LLOYD.
 ALFRED WILLIAM HUNT.
 MARGARET HUNT.
 HORACE DAVEY.
 LOUISA H. DAVEY.
 GEORGE GROVE.
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| GEORGE SHAW BRIGGS | " | Otley. |
| JAMES J. BYNNEN | " | Leeds. |
| J. VICKERY | " | York. |
| W. H. DYSON | " | Wakefield. |
| J. R. BAILEY | " | Halifax. |
| JAMES ROBERTSON | " | Scarborough. |
| WILLIAM H. BENNETT, Professor in Rotherham College. | | |
| F. H. COLAN, Grammar School, Bradford. | | |
| F. LOCKER-LAMPSON, Rowfant, Crawley, Essex. | | |
| VICTORIA WELBY. | | |
| F. E. MILLSON, Northgate End Chapel, Halifax. | | |
| PHILIP HENRY LAWRENCE. | | |
| ISAAC SHARPUSS, President of the Haverford College, Pennsylvania. | | |
| DANIEL C. GILMAN, President of the Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore. | | |
| H. B. ADAMS, Professor | " | " |
| RICHARD T. ELY | " | " |
| IRA REMSEN | " | " |
| G. STANLEY HALL | " | " |
| GEORGE M. EMOTT | " | " |

DR. MARTINEAU'S REPLIES

James Martineau to William Knight

35, GORDON SQUARE

LONDON, W.C.

April 22, 1888

My dear Professor Knight,

No words can express my astonishment, and, I need not add,—my gratification,—at the great arrivals which made yesterday memorable. The Address itself has something, in its quiet and touching simplicity, which betrays the graceful hand that drew it; and everything is endeared to me that comes from that pure and sincere source. In due course, you shall have my reply. But on the eve of departure for a sort of General Assembly of Free Christian Churches at Leeds, which will occupy this week, I am obliged to crave a little time. I am afraid that, by this absence, I may miss your promised call: yet, if you should be in town at the end of the week, we may meet: for on Friday, Saturday and Sunday there is a probability of our being at home.

Two very friendly letters I have received from correspondents who could not be expected to sign;—Croom Robertson and Leslie Stephen,—both as genial and generous as you would expect from such men. It is curious that, of all the letters which my book has brought, none have been so gratifying to me as three or four from authors whom I have unreservedly criticized.

No feature is more impressive to me in the list of signatures, than the large space occupied by the names of *Scottish* Professors and Ministers or Members of different Churches. It is one of the many indications that we are all feeling our way, on converging, but, as yet, untraceable lines, towards a sphere of spiritual sympathy in which our seeming contradictions will merge and vanish.

We are delighted at the prospect of having you for neighbours at Rothiemurchus in the late summer. With our united kindest remembrances,

Ever faithfully and affectionately yours,

JAMES MARTINEAU.

James Martineau to William Knight

35, GORDON SQUARE
LONDON, W.C.

My dear Professor Knight,

You will not wonder that the Address which you sent to me on the 21st ult. has overwhelmed me and put me to silence for some days, rendering as it does my 83rd birthday the most memorable of my life. But I must not longer wait for what can never come—the power of fitly expressing the wondering gratitude with which I read, in its paragraphs and signatures, assurances of respect and affection impressive from their number and priceless from their source. To be held of any account by the élite of those to whom I have habitually looked up, including representatives from the foremost ranks of literature, science, philosophy, religion, and personal character, is an honour simply mysterious to me. “Ea est profecto jucunda laus, quæ ab iis proficiscitur, qui ipsi in laude vixerunt.” To such an escort down the declining path of life, what can an old man do but throw out a few faltering words of thanks, and love, and reverence?

The studies and duties of my life have centred upon subjects which at once draw men into closest

union, and part them in widest severance, and so render the due combination of intensity with catholicity of affection one of the rarest of human excellencies. All the more striking is the abounding evidence of its presence in the list of names attached to your Address—names, not only supplied from variously contrasted schools of thought and faith, but even sent in by the very authors whom I have had occasion to criticize and controvert. Deeply as I am touched by this as a trait of personal generosity, I honour it no less as an insight into the philosopher's secret—that often differing conceptions, if in one direction opening into divergencies of opinion, converge in the other and close upon the truth.

To those who, though unable to subscribe to every clause in the Address, have yet signified their wish to be associated with its general purport of sympathy and congratulation, I cannot refrain from tendering my cordial acknowledgments, not only for what they express, but for the solid guarantee for its serious meaning and sincerity in what they withhold. Such residue of approval as, in hearts thus scrupulously honourable, can still be spared to me, is all the more precious from its fidelity to truth.

Among the signatures from foreign lands are some names dear to me as those of former pupils, now occupying posts of honourable service, whether for Church or University, in the East of Europe. But I also see the autographs of many distinguished scholars and philosophers whom I have long regarded

with the homage due to intellectual benefactors. In several instances the appearance of their names is the more grateful to me because, as I know it does not imply philosophical agreement, it can only mean that, in what they have seen of my writings, they find something to approve in the matter or the spirit of the discussions. To no ampler encouragement do I aspire than such witness from such men.

As I cast my eye on this Address and place myself in presence of those who bring it, I feel how strangely it inverts my real relation to them. "Who are these," I ask myself, "that speak to me of 'services rendered to the study of philosophy and religion'?" Why, here are the very men in whom is centred the genius of their time and who have educated us all,—poets, artists, great thinkers, and prophetic spirits, without whom what I admire and think and believe and love would never have found its present life in me. If ever words of mine have struck upon the hearts of others, they are but the reverberated tones of these master-voices that now generously render to me what they should rather reclaim as their own.

I am happy, dear friend, to entrust to you this inadequate message and grateful homage; and only wish that I could worthily supplement it by the separate acknowledgments due to your personal direction of this memorable presentation.

I remain, always,
faithfully and affectionately yours,

JAMES MARTINEAU.

May 8th, 1888.

APPENDIX I.*

*Oh that I knew where I might find him! that I might come
even to his seat!—JOB xxiii. 3.*

TO this longing there is no immediate or direct response. In succeeding sentences we only hear an echo of the question again and again reverberated. The speaker is utterly dissatisfied with the theory of Providence which his friends have put before him, and in his present mood of mind he cannot discover any data out of which to construct a theodicy of his own. With the utmost unreserve he records his passing thoughts, and the fluctuations of his experience. The Divine Nature seems to him an inscrutable abyss, and Providence a dark enigma. He virtually says that man cannot know the nature of the Infinite, or approach him, or it, with recognition. He can but follow the earthly light he has, and wait patiently in the darkness.

This is merely a temporary stage in the unfolding of the great drama of experience, which the author of this book with such graphic art portrays. But there is no expression of mingled longing and bewilderment, in all the rich monologues of this eastern sage, which awakens so deep a response in our particular era, as that embodied in the phrase, "Oh that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even unto his seat!" And although much within this book is strange to our modern eyes,—the absence of the old bright sense of God's

* The Sermon referred to at p. 81.

presence being traced back to some arbitrary displeasure, and the words of remonstrance with which He is appealed to sounding harshly in our ears,—we may learn wisdom from the record of the struggle, and the gropings of that theology which were inevitable in the youth of the world. It was characterised by a directness and simplicity which we miss in some of the maturer systems of the world's adolescence. While, therefore, Job pours forth his heart in strange soliloquies, and then addresses God in pleadings that seem more appropriate to an earthly court of justice than to one seeking an audience with Heaven,—while he replies to the friends who came to counsel him (those shallow, garrulous, and crude advisers), at times in the language of irritation, and again of pointed sarcasm,—we may not measure his utterances by the standard of modern restraint. Even in these "confessions of an enquiring spirit," half meditative, half devotional, in which he calls upon God with the familiarity of the mystic,—appeals, expostulates, and entreats, as if holding a colloquy with some one close at hand,—he does so merely in the style of the East. There is neither irreverence nor lack of humility in his heart. He is seeking One, whose presence he misses, in whose fellowship he used to rejoice, and whom he desires again to find. His spirit is making solemn quest for the absent yet besetting God, in whose existence he cannot disbelieve, even at those moments when he has no realisation of his presence. Repeatedly he gropes his way, as if amid the shadows of an unsubstantial land; but, even when he is uttering those mournful words, expressive of the conscious blank within him, you see that he is carrying unawares a rudiment of faith in the Divine Being whom he seeks.

It is clear that neither Job, nor his three friends, nor Elihu, the interlocutor who comes in at the close to arbitrate amongst the disputants, were able to look

upon the Universe as one great whole, its varied forces acting and re-acting upon each other endlessly, and its laws all tending to one result; the moral and the material aspects of it being but the separate manifestations of one and the same principle within. Of necessity every mind in that age looked merely to isolated aspects of the moral Universe, and localised Providence: and this book of Job, a religious poem of the East, gives us a dramatic delineation of the notions of the mind and the longings of the heart of primitive men, feeling after God, and conversing with him, as they search for such a theory of his administration as will explain the mysteries of Providence. They seek mainly for some explanation of that problem of the ages, with which thoughtful men have wrestled,—the chief difficulty in the way of a rational theology,—viz. the unequal distribution of the areas of evil and of good; the prosperity of the wicked, and the temporal disaster of the noblest and the best of men. But the result of the whole book is a vindication of the reality and worth of religion, even when the providential order of the world is obscure, and when the evidences of the Divine character are for the time being indistinct or evanescent.

It would be rash to say that our own era is more bereft of faith in the Divine Presence than those which have preceded it. Possibly had we the eye to see into their deeper phases, and to gauge their unmanifested troubles, all ages are pretty much alike in this. Only now we hear it more explicitly avowed. The centre of religious controversy has changed, and the immediate question of the hour touches the very root of all religion. Scientific men, the teachers of this generation, proclaim their inability to find God anywhere: and the general air is filled with kindred half-expressed complainings. We miss, however, some of the peculiar sorrow to which the experience so often gave rise of old. The

extreme pain which this ancient seeker after light endured, exhibits a marked contrast to the contentment and acquiescence of the modern mind before *its* conscious blank of experience. Those who perceive no recognisable Essence beyond the fleeting and the perishable are serene and satisfied, compared with many of their fathers who were similarly situated. The heart of the oriental is here smitten with keen anguish, and in his utter bewilderment he is ill at ease. He looks on the right hand, but the object of his search is not to be found: he turns to the left, but he cannot perceive Him: he goes forward, but he does not behold Him: he looks backward, but He is still hidden from his sight. It is like the sad and sudden feeling of orphanhood in early youth, intensified by the memories of a bright home, and the filial joys that are no more.

It may seem remarkable that so little progress has been made, since this experience was recorded, towards an *absolute settlement* of this first article of religious belief; so as to put it into the category of axiomatic first-truths, and to fix it beyond question as an indisputable verity, of which no man can doubt, as well as an imperishable treasure of the human heart. We might have thought that this at least would be a "light lightening every man coming into the world," without the possibility of an eclipse, or of the "darkness comprehending it not." But, lo! new systems of thought which deal with it have risen and fallen, and opinion has swayed hither and thither, acting and re-acting, forming, developing, and then disintegrating, in seemingly endless succession, like the ceaseless flow of the tides, or the annual birth and death of Nature.

One explanation is, that men have been dissatisfied with the partial glimpses vouchsafed to them, and the limited knowledge possible. They have formulated their little light into a rounded system, with a series of propositions often unverifiable even to

themselves; and have insisted that their inadequate solutions should be adequate for all their contemporaries, and also for generations to come. Worse than that, many in the next generation have too often accepted the tradition of their fathers, not as a lamp to guide them while waiting for new disclosures, but as a bequest from the past, oracular and exhaustive. They have sometimes failed to discern God as their own, by thinking of him mainly as the God of their fathers; and in seeking him thus, they have sought for the living amongst dead memories and the ancient splendours of manifestation.

Now no formula regarding the Divine Nature can possibly be exhaustive of the infinite reality, or even adequate as an intellectual chart to every age. In this matter, indeed, every healthy mind will oscillate between two opposite poles of experience. There is on the one hand a desire, deep-seated in the soul, to possess as accurately defined a creed regarding the Infinite, as is competent to man. On the other, there is a profound conviction of the inadequacy of every definition, with the feeling that the sense of an adorable *Presence* besetting us before and behind, revealing itself and again withdrawing, is worthier and more reverential than any attempt to define it could be: just as the heart feels that its deepest adoration transcends all utterance, and is only perfected in silence. Still the reason must always work behind the language of the heart, and elaborate its forms expressive of ultimate mysteries; defining, so far as it can, what is obscure, and consolidating what is vague. Thus reason comes to the aid of our theology, and indeed creates its intellectual forms; which, instead of being fetters, are the very girders of its strength.

There is, for example, a very crude type of religious aspiration sometimes found amongst the devoutest mystics, a longing to retain the Divine Presence before the inner eye of thought, which

reason disallows, inasmuch as it would blot out the vision of all else besides. It would tend to the confusion of the creature, and his absorption in the Divine Essence, while the soul attained to a sort of unearthly ecstasy. To desire the presence of the Divine, as a ceaselessly obtruded fact of consciousness, is unawares to desire the very extinction or collapse of that consciousness itself. To know God at all, we must, at the same time, and in the selfsame act, know man. The vision of the One is only possible along with the vision of the manifold. The recognition of the Infinite and of the finite go together; while the attempt to realize the Divine alone would crush the spirit of him who strove after the realization. The dominancy of that one thought, the close pressure of that one presence, would extinguish the life of the thinker and contemplator. Therefore, our commerce with the creature by intellectual vision and emotive touch is a help towards the more adequate realization of, and communion with, the Highest. Our sense of God is not keenest when the creature is utterly forgotten, and the mind is borne away into the third heaven of sightless ecstasy. It is most vivid when He is discerned at the heart of Nature, as the interior pulse of all its forces as well as the architect of its forms, the inner spirit of its beauty as well as the director of its laws, as the *other life* within our own as well as the guide of our earthly pilgrimage.

But these suggestions of God's presence are not darted into us with uniform persistency, at stated times and seasons; nor can we put the soul into such a posture as to *create* them, or even poise it so as to catch the free and passing inspiration. The Divine breeze bloweth when and "where it listeth," proclaiming its divinity by so doing. And it affords one of the most striking confirmations to the mind of the worshipper that *Another* is appealing to him, that he is in the presence of one who

is kindred, yet infinitely greater (before whom he is as nothing, and yet in that nothingness is cared for), that he thus darts the suggestions of his presence upon him from afar, and so often unexpectedly. The revelation is too vast and too divine to become a permanent and familiar experience of the soul. God is revealed through casual and repeated acts, in many fugitive glimpses. But the belief in One whom it can discern, and may rationally adore, strengthens with every new disclosure, and his presence grows clearer at every fresh apocalypse.

There are two facts which a study of the human soul and of the outer universe suggests, of equal significance as affording the data of a true theology, and alike necessary to sustain the life of piety in the heart. The one is the kindredness of God to man: and the other is his transcendency and immeasurable unlikeness. To dwell overmuch on the kindredness, and the communion which it permits and fosters, will breed irreverence. But to dwell overlong on the transcendency of God, and his unlikeness to the soul that thinks and worships him, will gradually merge religion in barren contemplation, and cold mental glances, and will ossify the very heart of piety. From our close connexion with the earth, we need a constant stimulus to the life of devotion; and it is the sense of divine affinity between the creature and the Creator that alone supplies it. Nay more, all the zest the brightness the serenity and interior joy of this mundane life must vanish, with the victory of that system of thought, which proclaims only the infinite difference, and magnifies the eternal chasm between the creature and the universal Life. What human interests would survive beyond the monotonous register of facts (similar or dissimilar), the stale collection of the statistics of mutability, if the inner eye saw no Vision, and the ear heard no Voice, and the heart apprehended no kindred Being whom it could name.

Listen to the language of the heart when least sophisticated ; not in its rude accents amongst savage men, or in lands untutored by civilization ; but in its ripest and most disciplined phases, when it is unartificial and unconstrained ; not crushed by the stronger intellect, or overpowered by the nimbler fancy. Let it be allowed to bear its spontaneous witness, and it will be heard to speak when the reason itself is dumb, and perhaps to leap up of a sudden to the front of all the culture of an age, and lead it. We shall then hear it speak of *One whom it apprehends in the very act of revealing himself*. For there are choice moments in the life of man, when the soul almost emerges from its prison-house of flesh, and is privileged to perceive the greatest of realities behind the veil of sense, as vividly as the eye perceives material forms, or colours, and motions. Those rare seasons, are (as a great poet calls them)

hours

Of visitation from the most high God.

But they cannot possibly be permanent. From their very nature they must quickly evanesce ; and that not because they arise from our own rare efforts to idealize what is ; but because they are due to the action of another over us, to the influence of the Divine Mind upon the human. They are not even due to the uprising of our spirits towards his by any act of will, but to the sudden descent of his Spirit from above, to the apparition of the Divine through the clouds which open and close again. But while they last, they attest the fact that another mind and heart has approached and moulded ours. They tell us that we have been privileged to draw near to a vaster Personality, and to feel the mystic touch of his Presence besetting us, as really as that of our fellow-men who breathe and speak and influence us by word and deed. And so religious men have always felt (while the Church has told of it in its

psalms, and hymns, and prayers), that in such hours the presence of their fellows with whom they hold intercourse in articulate speech, is not more but less real to them, than that Infinite Mind whose language they have heard by inward listening. They have told us that when undisturbed by the vocal medium, their recognition of that silent Mind is keenest; and that the love they rejoice in on the earth is but the poorest shadow of that divine affection, which has made the soul blessed with emotion, and has filled the inner eye with radiant light. They cannot tell us more. Why should they be asked for more? For a definition of an ultimate reality! For a description in words of what is holiest in the heart of man! They assure us that they feel One near at hand, within them and around, not as an unknown power, but as the central life and light and joy of all. They feel (quite as much as those who teach it as exclusive truth), that the great Reality is utterly transcendent; but in attempting at other moments to describe it, and then clothing the limitless One with human characteristics, they are aware that they are using an imperfect medium for the purpose. Speech and definition always fail us at the last. But the fact that all our efforts to describe and to define are felt to be inadequate is a direct proof that the essence then descried, and thus described, is not unknown but *known to transcend*, and is indeed realized by the heart in far clearer outline than any secondary reproduction of it in a proposition, or a symbol, could ever make it out.

This, then, is the characteristic feature of that knowledge of God which is an authentic and permanent possession of the race, while the notions which men form of him arise, and change, and die. All the "men of God" have recognized him as a Revealer; and have held that God "doth talk with man" (as Moses put it), "and he liveth." While their attempt to describe him as "Lord," "King,"

"Shepherd," "Guardian," "Father," as the "I am," the "Infinite and the Eternal," as the "Ancient of days," as the "Cause of causes," or the "Light of the soul," and the "Life of men," are so many conceptions gathered from the symbols of the earth, adequate and yet inadequate; sufficient as the steps of a ladder are sufficient in rising to a height, insufficient as an exhaustive account of an infinite essence. They partially satisfy the mind; they fix its wandering notions, they help it to retain its old experience, and to recall its vanished thoughts. And if they do not wholly satisfy the reason, they always aid the heart, at these moments of instinctive worship, when adoration starts its hymn.

But there is more than this first testimony to the presence of another and a greater, with whom the spirit holds communion. God is revealed within the soul as a Legislator there. The eye of the conscience looks with immediate vision on One whose moral lustre no material eye can discern. And how is this? Looking around him, man feels that he is environed, hemmed in, and helplessly enchained by physical laws. But looking within, he feels that he is not so. He finds that he is endowed with a power of moral origination, of doing or of refraining. At the very point where duty commands him to act, he reaches the parting of the moral ways. He finds that he is there and then left free to act. Instead of being helplessly under fate, he is his own fate-maker. And does not the cessation of necessity, the absence of compulsion, *just at this very point*, imply that Another has endowed us with that freedom, and has relaxed in our behalf the links of that chain with which he has bound up the processes of Nature. If our wills are free, they are not a mere development of prior forces. They are creative originating sources, pointing surely to One who has fashioned them in his image. The moral freedom of the creature thus

bears witness at once to his dependence on a Higher, and to his independence of the lower. It is the independent function of the dependent being: independent, because not the product of anterior forces; dependent, because the voice which legislates within proclaims the moral vassalage of the creature.

What then is the force of that voice of Conscience, which is the light and the lawgiver to our will? It is not a mere authoritative mandate,—“This shall be done.” It is the Divine appeal,—“This *ought* to prevail.” It is not like a voice of terrific thunder, crushing the will and extorting obedience. It is rather the persuasive voice of admonition and entreaty. This is the word of that living Providence which “besets us before and behind.” It is a voice most truly “in us, yet not of us.” It speaks without our calling on it, and will not be silenced by any entreaty of ours. Do we then create it? or has the accumulated experience of ages, the inherited tendency of many generations, given rise to it? If so, we should expect it to be uniform in its verdicts, and so clear in its utterance, that it could always be calculated upon, and dealt with as we deal with the fixed and indubious rules of Nature. But, lo! it appears, and it disappears. If slighted, it retires; and is not heard again in precisely the same form of appeal. It is intensely delicate, and susceptible of more damage than the finest products of the mechanician. It has the same fugitive character that we recognize in that apocalypse of God in Nature to which I have alluded. It seems thus to tell us that One is speaking through it as his deputy (if not, rather, through it directly), to whom we are permanently, vitally, and morally related; and that when the God within us is slighted, the Divinity divinely retires. The extreme subtilty, the delicate edge or moral fringe of the conscience, is a peculiar feature of it which could

never have been produced by any development out of dissimilar states and conditions. Its fugitive splendours, its quick surprises, its mute appeals, its unearthly upbraidings, its retirement when its admonitions are slighted, and its return to chide with remorse, how can these (its subtlest moral phenomena) be explained as a development of ancestral tendencies this way, with the survival of the fittest to live? And though it may tell us nothing directly of our origin, if it tells us that our spirits are the chambers of God's frequent presence, the places of his revelation, the sphere of his inmost agency, it gives us authentic tidings "where we may find him, and come even unto his seat." We cannot think of him, indeed, as absent from any part of that human nature which he fashioned. He may be discerned in the sorrows and joys of the heart, and even in the stormiest moods of the soul. It may often be, that as in the vision of the prophet, when "a great and strong wind rent the mountains and brake the rocks in pieces before the Lord, the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a still, small voice"; so, when the storm of our griefs (which seems so undivine) has passed, and in the fire and the earthquake of those passions (which are so) God is not discerned, in the stillness of that inner voice which succeeds them, "onward comes the Lord."

There is another way by which we may find him, one quite as valid, since it is consecrated for us by the feet of worshippers in many generations. It is old, yet ever new; because it is disclosed to us by the opening of the gateway of another's experience. It will sometimes happen, when the heart is wearied by its failures to rise to the Transcendent, and grasp it as a reality of its experience, just as it is falling back in helplessness or *ennui*, it will

suddenly realize the fact that the collective experience of the race is on its side ; that devout men, the prophets and psalmists of all ages, the men of faith and of prayer, have borne witness to the truth it is in search of, when burdened by the weight of a present inspiration. All inspired messengers to mankind, the heralds of the Eternal, have proclaimed as the very root of their testimony, as the one credential absolutely necessary to authenticate their message, that they were in direct and personal intercourse with God. How could the worshippers in Israel credit the announcements made to them by the seers of that economy, who came announcing truth in the name of the Eternal? They believed that to other souls around them a vision was vouchsafed, and an audience granted, to which they were strangers ; that the veil was exceptionally withdrawn in favour of a few selected spirits.

And far above them all, illustrious as they were, we have One who revealed the Father. Other teachers, the prophets of Palestine, of Greece, and of the East, have told us of a Being to whom they stood in the attitude of devout reciprocity. He alone spoke to us of the Father, "as one having authority," the authority of experience, the authority of a revealer. The disclosure of that fact at which earlier teachers guessed, and after which others groped in vain, the Fatherhood of God, with all that lies within its stupendous announcement to man, is surely a most noticeable feature in his teaching ; but I do not enter upon that aspect of it now. There is another—equally noteworthy, and more practical—to which I turn in conclusion. It was he who said, as no other teacher had said, "If a man do the will of God, he shall know." The law-giver of Christendom has told us that it is not the contemplation of the law that will most perfectly reveal him from whom it emanates. It is that obedience to its behests, which always floods the soul

with an interior light and liberty. Reflection on the rationale of the conscience, so as to discover a true theory of morals, will not disclose the facts that are revealed in silence to the obedient soul. For mere thinking reveals nothing. Criticism cannot open the eye of the blind. We must act, and we shall know. We must keep our consciences pure, and our hearts unsullied, and walk in the way of God's commandments; or we shall be blind as the mole, though we had a hundred eyes for intellectual discernment. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." This is the *via sacra* leading to God. Of our Lord's divine beatitude it has been well said that "it gives the law under which this cry of Job, and of our own day is answered." For the spirit of obedience quickens the inmost perceptions of the heart. It clears the eye of the mind, and irradiates the life on every side. It is surely a most rational expectation, that if God can approach and dart his suggestions into the soul, those spirits which have learned to obey to wait and to expect his revelations will be blessed by them. Could we always obey, we should never miss this Presence, and would have no occasion to utter that lament of semi-orphanhood again, "Oh that I knew where I might find him!" Then, too, our actual life of performances would be no longer, as it so often is, a satire on our ideal standard. We should not bewail the chasm between the two, and the other schisms which it breeds between the flesh the spirit and the mind. Our souls would remain the sanctuaries of God's presence, and his heaven would be found always within.

It is curious how inveterate is our tendency to look for Heaven above in some dim upper region, or far-off aerial plateau, or in some still more distant star; just as we begin by thinking of the throne of God above us, instead of within, where his kingdom is, and where all the insignia of his royalty

may be found. But we do not need to ascend any turret-stair of thought to look out for him afar ; nor do we find him only by historic retrospect amid the archives of a wondrous race at the dawn of history, although these help us as authentic finger-posts to the knowledge we all need. But "God is not the God of the dead but of the living." Could we live, and move, and have our being, lit up by the consciousness of that fact, all our experiences would wear a brighter and more benignant look. This earthly life would be felt by us to be a school in which we are being taught the nature and character of God, by-and-by to give place to a higher school in which that education may be carried on under happier auspices. Our very failure here to reach the higher knowledge should contribute to the desired result, as the discords of our present life may be the prelude to a diviner harmony, when the process of training is complete. Let us therefore do the divine will, with patience earnestness and zeal, that we may "know of the doctrine," and remember who it was who said, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

Oh, living Will ! that shalt endure
When all that seems shall suffer shock !
Rise in the Spiritual Rock,
Flow through our deeds, and make them pure,
That we may lift from out the dust
A voice as unto him that hears,—
A cry above the conquered years,
To one that with us works, and trust
With faith that comes of self-control,
The truths that never can be proved
Until we close with all we loved,
And all we flow from soul in soul.

APPENDIX II.*

IT is universally felt among reflecting men, that in proportion to the growth of a cultivated reason, the dogmatic standards of the past become less and less adequate, as charts of human belief. And there is noticeable at present, here and there throughout Christendom, a desire to recast and simplify the theological creeds; to retrench their details, on those matters on which the mediæval and renaissance theology alike rashly dogmatized, and to revert to the facts of history as the basis of belief. It is the constitutional duty of the Church to revise its creed; but, whether from the *vis inertia* of human nature, and the tendency to endure what time has tolerated long, or from the fear of ulterior consequences arising out of the process of revision, and a willingness rather to

bear those ills we have
Than fly to others that we know not of,

this duty is never discharged, till some crisis is reached grave enough to necessitate it.

We may anticipate much discussion throughout Christendom in future years as to the fittest form which the articles of the Catholic faith should assume. There is a question, however, much more important than the rearrangement of any theological document, the wise settlement of which may lessen much of the heat of religious controversy over disputable points. It is the relation in which the subscriber, who signs any public standard of belief

* The article on "The Ethics of Creed-subscription," referred to at p. 81.

as the confession of his faith, stands to that document; or the attitude (intellectual and moral) in which assent or conformity to a creed places the man who assents; in brief, *the ethics of subscription*.

In discussing this subject, I assume at the outset as indisputable, that all creeds are only approximations to an adequate statement of truth. A creed is the intellectual expression of those facts or principles, which belong to the Spiritual Order of things. It is the product of the systematizing intellect, which endeavours to arrange in symmetrical order, and to present in logical coherence, the data of religious knowledge and faith. But the very necessity for a creed at all arises from the imperfection of the human mind, and its inability to retain these data as a whole, without the help of some framework which binds them into unity. The truths with which the creed deals are not only immeasurably greater than the form which encloses them; they are in their very nature transcendent realities, which no creed could ever adequately formulate. The nature of God, and of the human soul, with the relations which subsist between them, are themes which the intellectual grasp of no one man, or set of men associated in council, could ever exhaustively summarize. And yet, it is this immeasurable transcendency of the subject-matter, which has in one sense given rise to the various theological formulæ. The scientific schools do not construct creeds, in part because their subject-matter is less disputable; but also in part because science deals not with the transcendent, but with the phenomenal. It is the glory of Theology that it deals with the transcendent; but, on that very account, its creeds are at once a necessity, and an imperfection. I assume, therefore, from the limitations of human thought, and the essential inadequacy of all intellectual forms to express ultimately mysterious truth, as well as from the poverty of those verbal frameworks in which we

express our intellectual concepts, that it is absolutely impossible ever to have a perfect creed. It is perhaps natural for the Church to desire it, but its attainment is a utopian dream. Our choice is between a form more or less accurate and expressive, to the individual who uses it, and the Church which adopts it.

Secondly, while all forms are ultimately inadequate, it is impossible for the same form equally to satisfy every mind within the Church, or even within a very limited section of it. So long as men differ in the original structure and balance of their powers, their attitude towards truth must vary; and in proportion to their growth (in other words, to the development of their intellectual life) differences of opinion will inevitably increase, along with the increase of their unity. It is a common delusion, that in proportion as the minds of men approximate to truth, they must necessarily approximate to each other. Their unity will doubtless be fostered; and, on many questions of intellectual and moral apprehension, their opinions will coincide. But it is neither possible nor desirable for them to contemplate truth from points of view absolutely identical. Their diversity will and ought to remain, and to grow, alongside of their unity. This, then, is another primary position from which we start. Uniformity of opinion among thinking men (whether within or without the Church) is unattainable and undesirable. It is simply stagnation and death. Life always differentiates or diversifies. Increase the life, and you do not tend to intellectual sameness, but to difference; and the greater our speculative divergence, the more intense our life. In a club of intelligent men, no one would desire an echo of his own opinion all round the circle of its membership. Were it so, the life of the club would cease, and itself would speedily and deservedly be extinguished.

So also in the Church. If a number of men agree to unite together under a common symbol, it is im-

possible for them honestly to do so on the theory of an absolute identity of belief. They must do so with an esoteric understanding that the formula they mutually adopt is only partially valid, an approximate or tentative statement, essentially inadequate. There is thus a certain self-abandonment in the act of subscription, a sacrifice of the individual for the common weal, without, however, surrendering his right to carry on continuous and independent thought. Rational sympathy with our fellow-men, with whom we must be associated in some way or other, whether as thinkers or worshippers or workers, leads to this self-abandonment in subscription. If the members of a Church refuse to sign a document as the confession of their faith, until they discover or construct a form which corresponds in all details to their own ideal, they will not only wait till doomsday—supposing their search to be thorough-going—but they will also inevitably cut themselves off from their brethren. They will isolate and leave themselves out in the cold, beyond all existing ecclesiastical enclosures. In short, there is a certain *vicarious* element in all healthy creed-subscription. We assent to it as a common symbol, not only as our own confession, but also as that of the community or religious organization with which we are associated. In other words, it is framed in the plural, not in the singular.

In the third place, it is impossible for the same intellectual form to continue to satisfy the Church from age to age: and, in most instances, to continue adequate to the individual, during a lifetime—*i.e.* provided he continues to grow mentally and morally. Suppose a creed to have been constructed in the first century of the Christian era, and made as perfect as the limits of human frailty allowed. As time rolled on, it would inevitably become obsolete in practical use and application. Not that it would cease to be of the highest historic value, and the greatest practical use; not that it would cease to be

an expression of truth, but it would infallibly become an inadequate expression of it. A creed, which is a few centuries old, of necessity becomes obsolete in form. It is not like wine, which improves with age. It appeals to the new generation as a dead unspoken language does. Neither is it desirable that the creeds bequeathed from the past should be adequate expressions of the advancing thought and insight to which each new age attains. It would not only be an anachronism if the beliefs of earlier centuries were thus prospectively adequate; but the form which was more perfect for the future, would be less perfect for the era in which it first appeared. Its very perfection would arrest theological enquiry, and prevent the unabated study of those problems with which all the creeds are alike concerned.

Thus, what many would regard as an ideal creed, a brief statement of simple facts, purged of dialectic, composed of what artists call "neutral tints," and adopted on that account as absolute and final, instead of being a benefit to the future, would fetter research, and obstruct the progress of theological thought. Several of the creeds which exist assuredly contain some hard and gritty propositions, the legacy of mediæval theology; but no wise man despises them on that account. He finds in each on the contrary some aspect of truth, which others present less perfectly, while none exhausts the whole.

Take even the most barbaric form, into which the traditions of the past have crystallized themselves, a creed which was the product of a rough warlike time, written, as some one has said, "as if it were a despatch from a battlefield, the heated manifesto of a victorious faction." Grant that it was framed at a time when there was a passion for system, as such,—when theologians undertook to explain everything, and could scarcely believe that there were any divine riddles in the universe, which it was impossible for man to solve,—we cannot say that the subsequent develop-

ments of theological thought would have taken place, had not the way been prepared for them by the existence of such a system. As it is impossible for any one who has reached and who breathes a freer air of thought, to say how much he is indebted for it to his earlier nurture in opinions which he has learned to discard; so with generations, and so with Churches. They are beholden for their subsequent freedom to the very creeds whose fetters they have shaken off.

We may appeal to individual experience for evidence of the fact that a final standard of belief is quite unattainable. Suppose any truth-seeker to note down, in due propositional order, what he believes at a certain age. If he lives and pursues his researches, his opinions must inevitably change. Have not the majority of those now 'in Orders,' in the several Churches, outgrown those views which seemed to them final, before they left the University, and entered the profession of the Sacred Ministry? If it be so with the individual, *a fortiori* with an associated company of men, united together in a Church. As the intellectual area enlarges, the probabilities of mental divergence increase. The more numerous and competent the seekers after truth, the more varied their points of view, and the more diverse the conclusions at which they arrive. It may be farther asserted that it is morally illegitimate in any one to subscribe a document as the *final* expression of his faith; or to feel towards any creed whatsoever that it is, or that he would like it to be, ultimate. He is not only foolish, he is to blame, if he binds himself never to think otherwise than he does at the time of subscription.* It would be an immoral vow, and tantamount to intellectual suicide; besides being a vow

* It is a noteworthy circumstance that the Free Church of Scotland, in revising the questions to be put to its ministers at ordination, has modified those which are put to the clergy of the Establishment in one important respect. At the close of the fourth question, the promise to believe "for all the days of your life" is omitted.

impossible to fulfil. He might just as well bind himself, as a late Bishop of Norwich has well said, "never to grow taller or thinner." And practically no one ever does so. Even the most unenlightened subscriber, who may be half consciously an infallibilist, will always tell you that he has not bound himself to ignore fresh critical enquiry. In theory then, all who subscribe creeds hold that their act of subscription does not foreclose enquiry, and that it is in the power of the Church at any time to alter and re-adjust its creed, when fresh light is obtained. But with the majority this is a perfectly barren admission. It is always barren, so long as the fresh light is neither looked for, nor discerned when it shines.

The question has another aspect equally important, viz. this: How far is one who, in the course of theological enquiry, has come to entertain opinions different from the majority of his co-religionists, bound to avow these differences? and how far is he at liberty to maintain an esoteric doctrine of his own? This part of the subject is of immense importance in our time, and in discussing it we must endeavour to avoid "the falsehood of extremes."*

Manifestly, no one can consistently maintain that all men are bound to give public expression to every divergence in opinion from their fellows. To do so would turn ecclesiastical gatherings into arenas of perpetual conflict, and religious conferences into theological bear-gardens. Besides, it would deflect the enquirer from the main purpose of research, were he bound in the end to make a public declaration of the results of his enquiry. It would neutralize the more silent processes of personal growth, and the gradual ripening of conviction. We are never bound to wear our opinions on our sleeve;

* It has been discussed from one point of view by the late Mr. Henry Sidgwick, in a pamphlet entitled *The Ethics of Conformity and Subscription*, published by Messrs. Williams and Norgate, 1870; and, from another, by the late Bishop of Norwich, in the first of his papers on "Free Discussion of Religious Topics."

or to proclaim aloud, as from the housetop, how far we differ from other men. That may be the ideal of those who glory in "the dissidence of dissent, and the protestantism of the protestant religion"; but there is neither "sweetness, nor light" in it. We are no more called to announce to all and sundry how far we agree and how far we differ from them, than it is our duty to be inquisitive about our neighbour's faith, and with vulgar curiosity or selfishness strive to be his conscience keeper. Such procedure would engender a miserable egoism, and the ceaseless obtrusion of our idiosyncrasies, it might be our singularities, upon the notice of others. It is true that no one is at liberty to cloak or conceal his opinions, from indolent acquiescence, or from a desire for "peace at any price." But it is enough if he lets his convictions find utterance, when it is spontaneous and natural to do so—when truth would be compromised by silence or by reticence—a very different thing from obtruding his ideas, or courting inopportune discussion.

It is practically impossible, then—as everyone with moral perception will at once allow—for a man to leave a Church on the ground of doctrinal divergence, as easily as he would leave a political society, when he objected to any of its superannuated rules:—

"Feelings," says Mr. Sidgwick, "that everyone must respect, make it impossible for a man voluntarily to abandon a Church as easily as he would withdraw from a scientific or philanthropic association. The ties that bind him to it are so much more intimate and sacred that their severance is proportionately more painful. The close relations of kinship and friendship in which he may stand to individual members of the congregation present an obstacle to severance which all in practice recognise, if not in theory; but even to the community itself, and its worship, he is still bound by the strong bands of hereditary affection, ancient habit, and possibly religious sympathies outliving doctrinal agreement."

It will be admitted that religious affinities are deeper than any theoretical divergences can be; and that ties, such as those to which Mr. Sidgwick refers, which are the result of years of sacred labour amongst one's fellow-men, cannot be abruptly severed. The man who would break them, on the ground of mere intellectual divergence, would be really a very weak man, morally obtuse, and devoid of healthy perceptions of duty; instead of the courageous and honest individual, which some of those who are jealous about uniformity of doctrine, would make him out to be.

It may be replied, all these ties are trifles compared with the duty of veracity in subscription, and of loyalty to the great dogmas which are held by one's co-religionists. But suppose the dogma, which the Church regards as fundamental, is not so regarded by the individual in question? The Church cannot force him to think it fundamental, if to his own mind it is subsidiary. Nor can it expect a man to excommunicate himself, or to adopt a standard of public virtue which is to his own mind morally unsound; and so to bring his work (presumably fruitful) to a sudden end, simply because his brethren think that it would be an act of magnanimous virtue and of high-principled honesty to do so. It is well that the responsibility of excommunication lies with the collective Church, and that the duty of leaving it does not rest with the individual. Let him remain then wherever he finds a sphere of usefulness and modest labour, and continue at his work, despite differences from his fellows, until they exclude him from their company.

We may further observe, that were the Church to reckon it a public duty in all its office-bearers to proclaim their slightest dissent from its standards, and to leave the old enclosures in consequence of them, it would itself be rapidly impoverished, if not destroyed. None of those who desire

uniformity in opinion profess a wish to arrest the progress of free enquiry, and thorough-going research as to the origin of Christianity and the nature of Christian doctrine. They all hold it to be the theologian's duty evermore to pursue truth with passionate ardour, not considering that he, or his fathers, "have already attained, or are already perfect." Well; he occupies meanwhile a certain position in his Church, where he wields sundry influences, as well as discharges certain duties. Is it to be supposed that he is bound, on the first discovery of an intellectual difference between his own views and those of others, to withdraw from their society, to bring his labours amongst them to a close, while he searches for a new field for the fruitful employment of his powers? It is folly to assert it. For the process would be an endless one. If he is in search of an ideal Church, with an ideal creed, he will find none upon the earth; and he will be, like the knights-errant in quest of the Holy Grail, a fruitless traveller over the world, a theological wanderer to the ends of it. He will be perpetually "arising and departing," out of this that and the other religious organization, feeling that they are "not his rest." What then? Let him remain where he is, and not obtrude his singularities. Let him associate with, and learn from his fellows, who differ widely from himself; and if anything theological "be revealed to him that sitteth by, let him hold his peace, that all may learn, and that all may be edified."

Again, we ask if it is possible for the theological enquirer to pursue his researches with absolute candour, when he knows that as soon as he defects by one or two degrees from the faith of his brethren, he must forsake their company, revoke his subscription to the common creed, or be reckoned dishonest in his conformity to it. By the adoption of what may be called a rigorous literalism in the ethics of subscription,

there is always a premium on conformity, and a bribe against enquiry. Nor is it necessary that one who desires a less stringent formula of subscription should be the special advocate of "Free-thought" as against "Authority." The plea of many modern Liberals who boast of their emancipation from all the fetters of authority is frequently as narrow and illiberal, as it is loud, fussy, and vulgar. But we ask, on the other hand, how an enquirer who is candid, conscientious, free from bias, and intent on the discovery of truth, can pursue his researches with a single eye and an untrammelled heart, if he has this alternative always before him—'Conform, or resign; assent to the old creed absolutely, or leave the goodly fellowship of your co-religionists'? And while it is only the ignorant, the stolid, or the worldly-minded who are able to go on in the routine of past convictions, the moral and spiritual value of intellectual changes in belief is, I think, not sufficiently recognized. It is indeed hardly recognized at all in the modern Church. Hence the need for reiterating what is to thoughtful men a truism: that change of intellectual position is the sign or synonym of intellectual health. We progress only as we change. Therefore the more change the better, provided it be a movement forward, and not a stepping backward. One generation cannot tie up succeeding generations to its decisions; and some progress has surely been made, since the latest settlement of the Articles of Religion, by the youngest section of the Church, which has attempted to draw them up.

But in all these Articles we have merely a series of decisions, by fallible though intelligent men, open to modification by their successors; and every modification must begin, as has been frequently remarked, from within the Church itself. It cannot be done by outsiders. The Church will not (perhaps to its own loss) listen to the voice of reformers who stand outside its pale. Jealous enough of innovators within, she is usually more jealous of physicians with-

out, whose diagnosis she thinks must necessarily be superficial, and whose prescriptions cannot therefore be followed. But if the modifications of the common Articles must originate within the Church, does not that imply that the individual or individuals who suggest it must themselves have first departed from the position occupied by the framers of the creed? It is self-evident. The Reformer must have already broken with the old landmarks, at least to the extent to which he desires their modification. Therefore, to concede that the Church may at any time alter its creed, if it receives fresh light, is virtually to concede all that I contend for—viz. that the Church must be prepared to tolerate men within its pale, as honest subscribers to its public documents, whose individual opinions diverge from them less or more—that is to say, men who regard their form as defective, and even some of their statements as positively erroneous.

The concession of the Church's right to revise her standards logically carries with it the toleration of diversities of opinion within the Church itself. The fact that a man is ordained to office in a Church, and at ordination gave assent to certain documents, becoming an agent of the corporate body, does not tie up his freedom to enlighten it as to what he may discover to be errors in its formulæ. It would be an immoral act to sign away that freedom. No Reformation of the Church could ever have taken place, had such a principle been acted on. But it is equally clear that the Christian teacher who discovers the insufficiency of the creed he has subscribed, is not bound, unless he deems it his duty or his mission to commence an agitation for reform, to avow to all and sundry, especially to those who cannot understand his position, the precise details of his divergence from it. In doing so he runs the risk of giving needless pain to some, and of startling and unsettling others. He excites a commotion, and is sure to constitute himself a mark for theological arrows, which the foolish and the

fanatical will discharge against him. Besides he runs the risk of breeding in his own spirit the vice of self-sufficiency ; as if, his detection of a flaw in the old and venerable documents was so important a matter for his contemporaries, that he must set a whole Church in commotion about it, fostering his personal vanity and self-importance. It would be far more dignified, and far more healthful for him to keep silence, and use his freedom to profit by a deeper pondering of the questions at issue, and a modest effort to teach his fellow-men around him.

On the other hand, reticence of opinion, and concealment of those chasms which exist between us and others, might be so excessive as to lead to an unbridled individualism, which would go far to destroy the cohesion of a Church. A Church symbol is a bond of union amongst the members of a corporate body ; and were public sanction given to unlimited secret divergence from it, the sense of duty, which the individual owes to his fellows, might be weakened. It might lead to the hiding of conviction, and to a policy of concealment which would have disastrous moral issues. It would be a palpable evil if either society at large, or the common body of worshippers, were deceived by the action of their guides in a matter of such importance.

Is the question, then, one of degree ? Is each individual to determine for himself when his divergence has become so wide, that he must in honesty separate himself from the community with which he has been associated ; and when it is sufficiently slight to warrant his remaining within the Church pale, and making no fuss about it ? Is the individual, in short, to determine when his "particular dissent" has become greater than his "general assent" to the existing creeds ? I think the answer must be an affirmative one ; that while the Church adopts a common symbol for its members, it cannot enforce an absolutely rigorous interpretation of it ; and that a solution

of the difficulties which beset the question must be sought in the direction of a relaxed formula of subscription. Our relief does not seem to consist so much in the substitution of a simpler and less intricate creed for one more involved and detailed—though that is certainly expedient,—as in *a healthier and more humane attitude towards all creeds whatsoever*. Let the Church announce explicitly that she regards her most perfect creed as, at the best, a very partial approximation to an ideal statement of truth, a statement carrying within it the signs of imperfection, (and therefore of transition and decay), as truly as it is the record of discovery, or the trophy of victory. If she cannot bring herself to this humbling confession—which would be a sign of real greatness—let the individual members, who bear office in the Church, act upon that conviction. Surely it is as much the duty of a corporate body, as of an individual, not only to abjure the notion of infallibility, but also to renounce the conceit of great attainment. It is always a sign of mental and spiritual poverty in a Church to be self-complaisant as to the soundness of its creed. It is its permanent duty to “forget what is behind,” even in the construction of its best theological formulæ, and to reach out after a better, while “whereunto it has already attained, it may walk by the same rule, and mind the same thing.”

To the student of the history of opinion it is curious how often Churches drift into the idea, that all candid men must ultimately come round to their way of thinking on religious questions, and this precisely on those points where their reasonings are most precarious, and their conclusions most disputable. The fact that men of equal intelligence earnestness learning and competence arrive at conclusions the most diverse, on the most momentous of all subjects, is too notorious to need either proof or illustration. What is the inference to be drawn from this wide divergence? Not that one is the victim

of bias, and another of inveterate prejudice ; that one is fatally in error, and another altogether in the right ; but that all "see through a glass darkly," and all "know in part," that there is a residuum of truth within every error ; and therefore that the differences in theological opinion, and the creeds in which they are formulated, is but a difference in degree, all being fundamentally inadequate and everyone doomed to change. It is, however, the besetting snare of theologians and creed-compilers to transcend the limits of the knowable ; to employ language, in expressing the inner essence of mysteries, which it is altogether incompetent to unfold ; and thus, to draw out an exhaustive chart of doctrine, while the explorer may be himself far out at sea, and can take soundings with no other result, than to proclaim that the ocean is unfathomably deep.

Again, since intellectual agreement is of less and less consequence to educated men—since they usually receive more from those with whom they differ than from those with whom they agree—it cannot greatly signify whether the opinions of the religious teacher are exactly parallel with those whom he teaches ; while it is always undesirable that theirs should be a mere echo of his.

It would be well to leave the spread of uniformity to the spontaneous action of that tendency to union which always exists amongst men, side by side with their inclination to diverge. And if, to insist on an absolute uniformity would be fatal to the intellectual and spiritual life of the Church, it is clear that no individual theologian, and no company of theologians in council assembled, neither bishop nor presbyter, are able to draw the exact line of doctrinal assent, divergence from which is not permissible.

Theology, like all other sciences, is progressive. Being progressive, its data must undergo constant revision and scientific scrutiny. It follows that the doctrinal standards of the Church must change from

age to age. And while the existence of many in the Church who cannot accept the creeds in the sense in which the majority accept them is an absolute necessity, it would be well if, by frequent revision and readjustment of the standards, this necessity were minimised. It cannot be wholly removed. But as events tend continually to increase it, as the progress of knowledge renders the old forms more and more fossiliferous, it is wise for the Church repeatedly to adapt its symbols to the onward stage which theology as a science has reached. If this is not done, the temptation to resort to allegoric modes of interpretation, and to make use of an esoteric sense, is proportionately increased.

To recapitulate, then, the conclusions at which I have arrived, on the ethics of subscription :—

1. The most perfect attainable creed is only an approximation to an adequate statement of Truth ; and all creeds are ultimately inadequate.

2. It is impossible for the same creed equally to satisfy every mind within the Church at any given time.

3. It is impossible for any creed to continue adequate from age to age. Every intellectual form tends to become obsolete.

4. It is illegitimate in anyone to subscribe a document as the final expression of his faith. Intelligent assent does not imply a determination to adhere always to the adopted or inherited form.

5. To leave a Church because of intellectual divergence in belief is cowardly, if not criminal ; it is weak, if not irrational. It is deserting the Church, and forsaking the post of duty.

6. Reforms of all sorts are not only best accomplished from within ; they are only possible through the patience, forbearance, modesty, tact, and temper of those who are already within, when they seek to carry out the reformation.

7. The best kind of reform is not accomplished by agitators who begin a crusade against existing creeds,—the men whose watchword is, agitate for a change, but do not innovate till the change is sanctioned. For the agitation would be endless; it would need to be chronic, in order to be thorough-going,—debate succeeding debate, with perpetual heart-burnings, strife, and loveless controversies, devoid of the scientific spirit. And in the intermediate period, till the change was publicly sanctioned and ratified, the Church would suffer from the evils of unhappy controversy, if not of internecine war, with schisms and endless protests from dissenting minorities.

What then is our conclusion as to the moral import of assent to a creed? Premising that no one can rationally assert that subscription has necessarily the same moral import to all men as to himself, I affirm:

First, that public assent to a creed is the expression of deep reverence for the faith of our forefathers; a reverence which the lapse of time, and the increasing inadequacy of the forms they used, only deepens and confirms. We look on their formularies, not as antiquarian relics which have survived the wear and tear of time; but as the venerable memorials of their religious insight, and theological attainment, guided by that Divine Spirit, which has never been withheld from the Church in its work of creed-making.

Secondly, we express our personal sympathy with, and our respect for the doctrinal conclusions at which they arrived, not as a final expression of truth, or their creed as a perfect mould in which that truth should be cast; but as a trustworthy expression, and a valid mould for their age and time. We assent to it, and to its place in history—in the history of Symbols. We avow our belief, that the particular creed to which we assent, contains the truth without exhausting it. It may be erroneous on many points, incomplete in others, exaggerated and one-sided here and there. But we accept it as more satisfactory

than unsatisfactory, as more complete than defective, more trustworthy than misleading. We never can renounce our right to think independently of it, or outside of its limits, while we believe that it must be defective on some points.

Thirdly, we sign it with a certain self-renunciation, or abandonment. We sign it, as I have already said, in the plural, and not in the singular. We assent to it as the expression of the common faith, the belief of the collective Church. And here, as elsewhere, the logical law finds scope; the wider the comprehension, the narrower the extension, or the less the particularization. That is to say, if we are to have a public standard, expressive of the faith of the Church catholic, including all the diversities of Christendom, we must either have a neutral creed, very general in its terms; or the individual subscribers to the detailed creed (which expresses the faith of the majority) must assent with reservations, and with self-abandonment for the sake of their brethren, not expecting a perfect formula in any case. Suppose that those who object to this had been present at any of the great Councils in which dogma was discussed and decided, had stated their views, and been opposed, what would have been their attitude? Would they not have continued to hold their opinions, even though the Council decided against them by a majority? And if they gave their assent to the formula, as finally constructed, would it not have been with a certain reservation? It is no demoralization to the individual conscience thus to subscribe; but it would be directly demoralizing to assent unconvinced, or because the majority decided so. If, therefore, when we can assent to the propositions of a creed literally, we do so; when we cannot assent to them literally, but can give them a figurative meaning, may we not also do so? and, when we can do neither, may we not accept them as more adequate to our brethren, with whom we

are associated, than they are or can be to us; and be thankful for their satisfaction with them?

We stand between two opposite risks in this whole matter; but they unite in this, the danger of unverity. If we subscribe a long and intricate document as the confession of our faith, which we have not examined with the fullest and most careful scrutiny, in the light of Philosophy, of History, and of Criticism—and have satisfied ourselves that it is a trustworthy expression of a rational man's faith—we are, to that extent, unveracious in subscription. If, on the other hand, we assent to a document containing propositions from which our reason and conscience revolt, as if we received it implicitly, we are to that extent unveracious also. But if we sign it, not only as a personal expression of belief, but as the manifesto of a Church,—and in so doing proclaim our unity and deep religious affinity with our fellows,—we escape from all unverity, and can conscientiously sign documents, which are to us only partially adequate, documents which we would fain see altered, both for our own and for our brethren's sake. The vicarious element that enters, or may always enter, into healthy creed-subscription has not yet received the prominence it deserves. A man must have a strong reason to justify him in separating himself from the community in which he has been educated; and it would surely tend more to his personal growth, insight, and edification, were he to remain within its pale, and learn from those who think differently from him, than were he to add to the schisms which exist, or wander out in pursuit of the unattainable ideal of a perfect Church on earth.

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